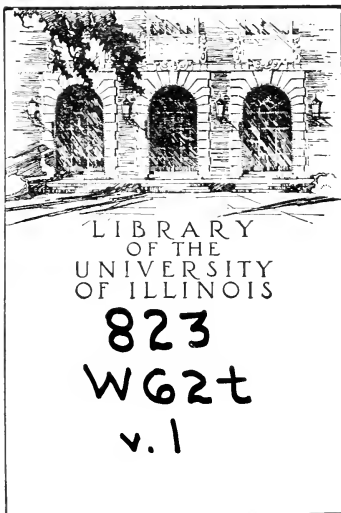




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TILBURY NOGO;

OR,

PASSAGES IN THE LIFE

OF

AN UNSUCCESSFUL MAN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "DIGBY GRAND."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TILBURY NOGO.

CHAPTER I.

Fortune is Bardolph's foe, and frowns on him.

Henry V.

To fling the billows from the drenched hair,
And laugh from off the lip the audacious brine ;
And then to plunge, with wanton spirit, down
Into their green and glassy gulfs.

It is the prevailing cant of the day, to uphold
intensity of purpose and force of will as being
equal to and commensurate with energy of
mind and power of body. Had it but been
so, I, Tilbury Nogo, might truly have achieved

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success ; but, alas ! like the comforter and consoler of Sempronius, I can only congratulate myself on having deserved it. Before entering upon the thrilling relation of some of my adventures in civilized life, and the detail of my many attempts at distinction and success, it may not be amiss, in these genealogical days, when the landed gentry of this favoured country—from the cotton-lord of yesterday, who has just completed the purchase of his hundred thousand acres, to the sturdy yeoman, who himself tills the profitless soil that barely keeps him from starvation—must all and each be handed down to posterity, with their imaginary ancestors, on the golden page of history, as emblazoned by the ingenious Mr. Burke—it may not be amiss—in fact, it is absolutely essential—that I should commence by specifying how I, T. Nogo, was the only son and heir of Zachary Nogo, Esq., who, in his espousals with the amiable Miss Muff, was blessed with no other issue than the writer of these pages, whose only apology for thus presenting himself to the public is the sincere hope that he may prove as a beacon and a warning to the too-ambitious youth of this aspiring age, who often flatter themselves that

“to deserve success” is as efficacious as “to command it.”

I may here remark that my tendency and attachment to field-sports may be attributed to my descent, on my mother's side, from a family who, time out of mind, have been ardently addicted to all out-of-door pursuits. I have met more Muffs out hunting than in any other assemblage of my fellow-citizens, albeit they are to be found in very sufficient multitudes engaged in graver and more important pursuits.

My father had a great idea of Eton; and although his death delayed my appearance at that jovial school till I had completed my twelfth year, no sooner was I fairly launched in my teens than I was packed off, *per* stage, to take my chance of arriving at my destination—Eton Coll., Bucks—in company with two other “new fellows,” one hat-box, one portmanteau, and one carpet bag, the latter well stuffed with provision for both body and mind, including a Greek grammar, a mighty cake, a “Gradus ad Parnassum,” as it is somewhat ambitiously denominated, and a cold plum-pudding.

I have not the face to inflict on my readers

the autobiography of an Eton boy; but I must "cry their mercy" for the narration of two anecdotes bearing upon that fatality which has pursued me through life, and which has ever interposed when success was all but in my grasp. Sysiphus was a joke to me; and, I take it, his task was no pleasant one. Whilst enduring the six-o'clock lessons, long mornings, faggings, and other *agrémens* of life in the fourth form, I was induced by the persuasive arguments of a fellow-*scug*, rejoicing in the appropriate name of "Tubbs," to relax my mind and forget my sorrows in the enjoyment of a bath at Cuckoo-ware, the pleasure being increased by its being a drizzling day in October, and the exploit being much enhanced by the certainty of a flogging if caught—or *nailed*, as we termed it—in the fact; that month being, very properly, one of those in which bathing is strictly forbidden. Well, away we went, in the highest of spirits, stripped, sneaked in, ducked, and persuaded ourselves it was delightful; when, in the height of our splashing, holloaing, and enjoyment, we were aware of the tramp of a horse, and the dreaded form of one of the undermasters was seen, cantering his hack slowly

along the bank. Tubbs, who could swim like a water-rat, was over to the other side in a second, and, on arriving at the shore called (why, I have never been able to understand) "Italy," effected a most successful shirk; whilst poor I, unwilling to be flogged, yet loath to be drowned—for my swimming was only calculated for a short boy, *in* his depth—was forced to emerge, and face the infuriated don.

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It was Tubbs who proposed the lark of going to bathe; but at eleven o'clock school, next day, it was, "Nogo to stay." I am secure of the sympathy of every old Etonian.

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As years rolled on, and the "scug" of former days rolled out into the well-cravatted stripling in the upper division, so did my ambition—that last infirmity of Nogo's mind—increase proportionately. There was a boy then in the school, a scion of a right noble house, whom I, in common with many others, admired, looked up to, and imitated — treading, though at an humble distance, in the footsteps of our paragon. There was nothing he undertook at which he was not most successful, no book he had not

read, no point under discussion in any society at which he was not *au fait*. Handsome, daring, talented, and reckless, how could he but succeed? Well, this boy—*man* in intellect and energy—amongst other more harmless pursuits, was deeply versed in the science of judicious betting—or “book-making,” as it is called, in contradistinction, I presume, to book-writing, which any one can do; and it was with open-mouthed admiration that we, his contemporaries, heard of his winning a large stake on the great national race of our summer half. Hundreds on a Derby was rather a “*pot*” for an Eton boy. Fired with a noble emulation, I vainly thought, on a lesser scale, to do likewise. Our Sculling Sweepstakes was coming on; and, from my proficiency in that particular department of boating, I thought I might fairly calculate on beating the rest of my school-fellows. Like the great original I copied, I got a betting-book, ruled it most carefully, and proceeded to enter my wagers on the most approved principle, backing myself heavily with all that would lay against me, but, in my inexperience, omitting to bet against any of the other boys. The consequence was, that I stood to win a

large sum in half-crowns and shillings, should I win the sweepstakes, and to lose largely in the same coin, should any other skiff pass the Brocas Clump a-head of mine. Well, the evening came—how well I remember it! The placid river; the level Brocas, with its stately clump standing out against the clear blue sky; the glorious castle; the flag on the round tower, drooping in the summer air—I see it all now. Then the start; the strain against the stretcher; the fever boiling in the veins, till the perspiration, bursting forth, seemed all at once to cool, refresh, and invigorate the quivering frame; then the turn round Lower Hope, the second wind, the rushes gained, and the coming down-stream, with a rapturous lead; the holloaing, from the bank, of five hundred fellows, all at the utmost pitch of their lungs, and only subsiding into an occasional scream, when so blown from running alongside the leading skiffs as to admit of no greater vent for the enthusiasm inseparable from a boat-race. “Well sculled, Nogo!” “Go it, Nogo!” “Well sculled, Smith!” “Go along, Brown!” “Well sculled, Robinson!” the latter worthy breaking both his rowlocks, in his animated endeavours to get

forward, and being instantly put *hors de combat*. "Well sculled, Nogo!" "Brown will bump him!" "Smith's beat!" "Nogo wins!" "Smith wins!" "Nogo!" "Smith!" "Hurrah! hurrah!" and Smith's skiff shoots by the well-known goal, one boat's-length ahead, Nogo second, and the redoubtable Brown a good third.

It almost broke my heart, boy as I was. It was so provoking to have nearly won and landed all my bets. It should have been a lesson; but the elasticity of youth soon brought forgetfulness of the past annoyance, and fresh hopes for the future; and again and again was I forced to admit the truth of the homely proverb that "a miss is as good as a mile." I should have been *sent up*, had it not been for a false quantity in the last of thirty fairly-written long-and-short verses; although I must confess that, prejudiced as I was in their favour, I never could see the merit of the twenty-nine preceding ones. But enough of Eton. "Her praise is hymned by loftier harps than mine;" though, like most old Etonians, notwithstanding all my reverses, my heart still leaps responsive to the well-known cry, "Floreat Etonæ!"

CHAPTER II.



Bard.—Out alas, sir ; cozenage, mere cozenage.

Host.—Where be my horses ? speak well of them,
varletto.

Fal.—I would all the world might be cozened, for I
have been cozened.



It would be superfluous to detail the many good intentions not acted upon, and plans cast aside, which occupied the few years intervening between my removal from Eton, and my entrance upon what is called “life.” How I read a little, hunted a little, fished, shot, danced, and drove in the same small proportion ; how I matriculated (nothing more) at Oxford ; how I thought of going into the army ; how I started for the Himalayas, making Paris my first stage, and eventually got no further than that pantomime of a town

—returning a wiser truly, if not a better, man; the old friends who gave me good advice, the young ones who helped me to disregard it; “all these I can forgive and those forget.” And I must now introduce myself as Mr. Tilbury Nogo, well dressed, well appointed, and well received; a member of the best clubs; lodging no matter where, within easy distance of the same; and, in short, in the common position of hundreds of other young men about London. I drove a cab, wore lavender-coloured gloves, went everywhere with no particular object, was better supplied with money than brains, by no means good-looking, and decidedly shy.

Such was the individual who turned out of Tattersall’s yard one frosty day in February, arm-in-arm with one of that class of acquaintances which the world is pleased ironically to term “a friend,” and who is more particularly distinguished by that appellation when he keeps you four-and-twenty hours in the vortex of a quarrel, to extricate you at the end of that time by putting you up to be shot at. Silently we passed the gentleman in the red waistcoat, whose unacknowledged greeting was cordial as ever. That cad is a wonderful

official; he has more acquaintances than any man in England, and winter and summer he never wears a coat. Silently we turned our backs upon the triumphant tomfoolery meant to glorify the greatest warrior of the age; and it was not till we caught the keen air blowing on us from the half-frozen Serpentine, that my companion, who had been in deep thought, proceeded to give me the benefit of his reflections:—

“Upon my word, I don’t think this frost will hold. I wonder, Nogo, why you don’t go to Melton.”

There was certainly not much in this lucubration; but such as it was, what a number of ideas these few words brought crowding into my brain! Melton, the cream of all winter society: noble earls, jovial M.P.’s, pleasant dandies, good sport, capital dinners, ox-fences, whist, claret, and hard-riding—all jumbled themselves up together in my head, not unaccompanied by certain misgivings that all this might be what is commonly called “too fast” for me; and it was some little time before I replied—

“Melton, eh? Well, I believe it is a very jolly place at this time of year, and—”

“Jolly place! Why, to begin with, it’s the only place in the world a man can hunt six days a week from, and it’s a bore hunting less. I wonder you didn’t go there last year. You know most of the fellows; you’ve got plenty of money (perhaps he meant *he* had had plenty of *my* money); and you might easily get a few horses together; I’ll manage that for you. Why, you’ve got some to begin upon; and I’ll tell you what, my dear fellow, I wouldn’t mind letting you have old Congreve and Barabbas for next to nothing, as I want to get rid of all mine.”

This was the more kind, as I was well aware of the merits of the animals thus unhesitatingly proffered in the cause of friendship. Congreve was a retired plater, who never having done anything on the turf, was pursuing the same useful career in the hunting-stable; and what with bad legs, bad temper, and a most inconvenient and eccentric way of disposing of his head, was altogether as disagreeable a horse as a man need wish to get rid of. Barabbas, a great white-faced, half-bred brute, whom I did buy, proved himself well worthy of that elegant appellation before I had kept him six weeks.

“ Well, you really are very kind,” was my reply, “ but the fact is, I am not quite sure about the horses I *have* got ; and though Phiz, Catamaran, and the old mare are all very well in some countries, and can go quite in front when properly ridden, yet I have my misgivings as to their being good enough for Leicestershire ; and then the fences ; and then I don’t quite know *where* to live there ; and, in short, it’s not an easy thing to manage, and so I must think it over, &c., &c., &c.”

Well, the long and short of it was, that after a *tête-à-tête* dinner at Crockford’s, one bottle of dry and three of ’25 between the two, I succumbed, made up my mind to go, and that forthwith, and handed over a cheque to my friend for the aforesaid Barabbas, who, I regret to say, became my property from that evening ; as for Congreve, though denominated by his owner as an outside good horse, and the best he had ever possessed, reason sufficiently retained her sway, till we parted, to prevent my having anything to do with *him*.

Next morning the misgivings came stronger than ever ; but the die was cast ; and when I found the frost was breaking, the wind getting well round to the south-west, my hack looking

so sleek and handsome, and London so muddy and disagreeable, I regretted my determination less and less, and even came to think of Barabbas and the cheque of three figures with complacency. I wrote for my horses from the country, ordered some more saddlery, and some top-boots from that prince of the sons of St. Crispin, who ascertaining that his customer did not intend to hunt at the great emporium of the craft, promised to make him a neat "provincial" pair of boots, and made all my arrangements to "take the field," as the old ladies call it, the following week. I do not know how people feel before a campaign, or on the eve of a revolution—though the latter is now hardly "a sensation"—but that last week in London was a most feverish one—"fiery expectation's dower"—and the last day I spent in it I quite came to the conclusion that, after all, there is nothing like a town-life. But it was too late to retract: the stables were engaged, likewise a swell stud-groom, the cavalry had already marched *viâ* St. Albans, and nothing remained to be done but to take a first-class voucher at Euston-square, buy a Bradshaw, and start.

The journey per rail to Syston was per-

formed, as all such journeys are, without hindrance or excitement of any kind; my fellow-travellers were nothing remarkable, and with the exception of my mistaking one popular M.P. for a friend's stud-groom, and another pleasant-looking, agreeable, sporting gentleman for a dissenting clergyman, the latter supposition being confirmed by the theological knowledge displayed in several expressions with which he garnished his conversation—neither misconception, I am happy to say, leading to my addressing the individual before I had discovered my error—nothing occurred to break the monotony of the London and North-Western line. Sir Francis Head's clever pamphlet, "Stokers and Pokers," had not then come out; and the mind was not strained in the endeavour to grasp the magnitude of an undertaking, in which, independent of the expenditure of coke, coal, and capital, the one small item of lunch alone consumes porkers by the thousand, and Banbury cakes by the million—a statistical fact now universally known, thanks to the research of the clever author of that amusing and instructive little work. Syston reached, and a post-chaise with horses in it for Melton duly proclaimed,

self, packages, and valet loaded therein and thereon ; No. I stowed away in the corner, and abandoned to those reflections, which in my case, inside a carriage, generally resolve themselves into a sound sleep ; whilst the post horses are bobbing and dodging themselves and their short tails through Rearsby, Brooksby, Kirby, and all the byes on the Leicester and Melton road, I may relate a circumstance which is often brought to my mind by the universal affinity there seems to exist between rapid travelling and sound sleep.

A friend of mine, by no means of a wakeful disposition, was summoned to Birmingham—a place he had never before visited, on the most urgent business, one of those cases where delay even of a few hours might be irreparable, and was sure to be attended with the greatest inconvenience. The early train was his only chance ; and breaking through all his luxurious habits of late rising, comfortable breakfast, and doze over a cigar until well into the afternoon, behold him up, dressed, and shaved, seated—actually seated, in the worst of humours, in a most comfortable first-class carriage by half-past five A.M. Like all men of late

habits, when he did break them he did it effectually ; and what with a sleepless night in anticipation of an early start, and the unusual exertion of rising by candlelight, he was as tired when fairly established in the well-cushioned arm-chair of the *coupé* as he ought to have been on his arrival at his destination. Balmy sleep soon shed her influence over the most faithful of her votaries, and deep were the notes in which the sluggard chanted his own lullaby ; the sleep of ages, we may suppose, would be but as that of one night—nay, of one hour, or even a few minutes, so mysterious is the agency which “tired Nature’s kind restorer” exerts over us ; nor is it in the power of mortal to explain, far less control, that influence which bows the eye, relaxes the muscles, and reduces the whole thinking and intellectual man to the level of that which has no life, “sans eyes, sans ears, sans everything”—what is it but a temporary death ? But to return to my vigilant friend : small surprise did he betoken at having slept through his journey, when the ringing of bells, the shutting off of steam, and all the bustle of a station brought him back to consciousness. More in accordance with his usual habits would it have

been to have remained snoring in that corner till forcibly torn away by guard, stoker, conductor, and porters ; but he had a great duty to fulfil, and with the recklessness of a desperate man he fixed his knuckles into his twinkling eyes—those eyes which, on ordinary mornings, the corner of a boot-jack would hardly seem to have power to uncloset—and with one mighty shake, and a triumphant exclamation, he grasped his carpet-bag and writing-case, pushed aside the porter who was vainly endeavouring to shut him in, threw back a farewell glance at the train now moving slowly northward, and striding across the platform to a stout man in green, and thrusting his ticket into the hands of the astonished functionary, he emerged into the morning air considerably nearer London than Birmingham ; as ere his first impression clothed itself in the half-formed words, “ Bless me, how alike all these stations are ! ” a second glance revealed the very cab that had brought, and the very driver who had overcharged him, whilst around and above him frowned the classic architecture of Euston-square on his astonished gaze. He had jumped out just as the train started, and although his non-appearance at Birmingham

was productive of all the anticipated inconvenience, I have heard that when he got back to his own house he went to bed again, and quietly finished his night's, or rather his morning's rest.

Certainly my sleep was not so sound as his, nor was the waking quite so unsatisfactory, as a well-lighted, most comfortable room at the George, with a blazing fire, and that sort of picturesque arrangement of clean table-cloth, glass, and silver, which foretells a well-served dinner, was by no means a bad exchange for the damp cushions and rickety motion of a post-chaise, letting in the draughts of a February afternoon, and cooling the interior till the shivering occupant wonders why a close carriage is supposed to be the warmest, and whether it can be possible that such weather as he feels at his extremities can have anything to do with what we call a thaw.

Everything looked very like hunting certainly ; I met the smartest of valets carrying the dirtiest of boots and breeches on the staircase. The waiter informed me of a run they had had that day, but quite in the business-like, unimportant manner that seemed to say

such things were of every day occurrence. There were foxes' brushes at the bell-pulls, and the meets, of heaven knows how many, packs of hounds over the chimney-piece. I quite wondered why a man couldn't hunt eighteen times a week. I am somewhat shy, and as a relief from the agreeable society of the waiter I sent for my groom, hoping to ascertain something about things in general from him, and make my arrangements for the morrow. In he came; such a coat, and such slender supporters! he looked as if he had put his arms through his trowsers and his legs in his sleeves. I saw his hat next day, and was surprised no more after that—

“Well, Stubbs, how did you get down? and how are the horses?”

“Horses all well, sir, and most of them fit to go; 'ceptin two as I had out to-day on the Widmerpool side; and the mare's got a cough, and the hack's been and hit himself, and Phiz is rather big, I should like to give him a turn afore you ride him, and—”

“Stop,” said I, not quite liking the way in which he was running through my stud, and wondering what there would be for me to ride;

“stop, I must have something for to-morrow ; I see the Belvoir are within reach, and I should like to look at them.”

“ Beg your pardon, sir, but to-morrow’s the Quorn day, in High Leicestershire, so I kept Barabbas and the young one for you to ride to-morrow ; ten miles from here, sir, and a very good place. I had the grey out the beginning of the week, and he frames remarkably well, never seems to refuse, pulls uncommon hard ; but I’ll put a bridle on, sir, that’ll soon stop that ; and Barabbas will go very well for second horse, and—”

I was forced to interrupt my voluble master of the horse, to beg he would indulge in no vagaries about bridles, as the little experience I have had has convinced me that servants and their masters are apt to differ considerably in their mode of treatment of that most sensitive of all things, a horse’s mouth.

“ Stop, let me have the hack at the door in time, if he is sound, and—”

“ Dinner, sir,” said the waiter ; which furnished me with a good excuse for getting rid of my attendant, and I stalked into my dressing-room to wash my hands whilst my soup was cooling, with the comfortable reflection

that amongst all the horses in my stable, the two I would most particularly rather *not* have ridden for my *début* at such a place as Barkby, were a young one, of whom I knew nothing, except that he pulled hard, and was rising six ; and Barabbas, of whom what I did know was by no means enough to give me confidence in a large crowd endeavouring to spoil a quick thing over a stiff country.

CHAPTER III.

A fox-hunt to a foreigner is strange,
And likewise subject to the double danger
Of tumbling first, and having in exchange
Some pleasant jesting at the awkward stranger.

Mazeppa answered, " Ill betide
The school wherein I learned to ride."

THE next morning saw me trotting merrily along, after a due study of the map and observation of the sign-posts, on high thoughts intent. I was screwed " up " to the sticking-place, and meant mischief. The morning was as if ordered expressly : there had been a slight frost, but the day was clouding over ; and the wind, though scarcely perceptible, had that keenness which so often accompanies fine scenting weather. I had started early, to avoid the companionship of men with whom I had not yet the honour of being acquainted, and many of whom I did not know even by

sight, though their names were familiar to my ear and honoured in my heart. Nimrod's book, "The Hard Riders of England," had taught me, as a boy, to look upon "a good man over a country" with a most reverential feeling; and I had really never quite got over this sort of hero-worship. It would be the height of injustice to deny that many of those whose names my boyhood honoured solely for their well-known success as sportsmen, have been equally distinguished in the more important pursuits of life. Witness the court, the camp, and the bar; the desert and the ocean, the plains of the Punjaub and the walls of St. Stephen's.

I was a little nervous, certainly, and none the less so for having to ride Grey-friar; but I was determined to go, and a little more or less of peril made trifling odds. It was a service of danger altogether; but then the *κνδος*, if obtained in that country! In short, "Do or die" was the motto—very much the feeling with which a Frenchman goes out hunting. His national vanity makes him think the eyes of all England are upon him, his inborn gallantry impels him to be forward, and his acquired *sang froid* prevents him from

disclosing his misgivings. He generally rides unmercifully hard, till in the natural course of events he is stopped by a rattling fall, and is invariably flattered with the somewhat doubtful compliment of having gone so extremely well for a Frenchman ; but for all this, I do not think he thoroughly enjoys it. I found my way easily ; and cantering pleasantly over sundry most extensive grass-fields, agreed with the noble lord who used to declare riding to covert in Leicestershire beat hunting anywhere else. An early breakfast, not so hearty as it might have been, a free-going hack, and a fine morning are wonderful things for the spirits ; and I was delighted with the cheerful “ Good mornings ” of a farmer or two whom I overtook, and the universal touch of the hat from every countryman I met. A friend of mine used to say, “ They always call you My Lord before Christmas ; afterwards, lords are so plentiful here that it is no compliment : ” and certainly a scarlet coat is duly appreciated in Leicestershire.

“ Well, I rode on, and on I rode,” as the old Border ballad has it ; and after overtaking sundry horses that looked like the impersonation of speed, strength, and gallantry

(I am at a loss for a classic simile : the Greeks had not an idea of what a horse should be ; look at the heavy-shouldered brutes in the Elgin marbles : no wonder they drove them), I came at last to an open gate, and turning short found myself in company with two or three men in red coats, looking at the neatest pack of hounds in England. “ And so they ought to be ! ” I hear the reader exclaim ; well, and so they are : level, powerful, and graceful. What can look more like going than eighteen couple of bitches out of the Quorn Kennels ? But hounds are universally voted a bore ; so I must close my raptures with the remark that the hounds looked as if they should go the pace, the horses as if they could, and the men as if they would.

After Nimrod’s description of a run over Leicestershire, which, written by the best sporting author of the day, was, I believe, touched up by the cleverest reviewer, and illustrated by the most talented artist, it is in vain for an humble pen to attempt to follow in his steps, “ *non passibus æquis*,” as he himself would have told us, for verily he was *up* in Virgil. Vain, then, would it be for me to attempt to describe, as he did, the “ lawless

burst," the wicked riding, the "Siberian waste of grass," the cracking rails, the submersion of new coats and gallant souls in the Whissendine, which, it would appear, ought to be regularly dragged during the hunting months; the little bay horse whose untimely stop comes home to the feelings of all "*de te fabula narratur*;" and lastly, the scream, which frightened the village and hall of Cottesmore from its propriety, and must have called forth a responsive yowling from the denizens of its well-known kennel. Neither can I fall back upon a true and particular account of what happened to me individually, in the first person; for I am again "*headed*" by the same author, who describes a most courageous character fighting a young horse through the best part of the best run "that had been seen for three seasons," as the writer himself expresses it in his veracious and autobiographical letter to his friend. My exploits and eventual failures would indeed pale before this worthy's account of "how he rode over young M. (I wonder who *he* was), how he lost his whip and part of his rear-guard in a bullfinch," how he cleared nine yards with the young one, but lighting in a furrow and on a mole-hill nar-

rowly escaped the fate of the illustrious Anti-Jacobite, who fell a victim to the architecture of the little gentleman in black velvet; how he was up and at it again; and after many more deeds of daring and sundry mishaps, is eventually reduced to a stand-still, the young one being completely beat and minus an eye—an accident not confined to Leicestershire, if we may judge by the number of times the same casualty appears to occur in the neighbourhood of Holborn and other parts of London, “There you go with your eye out” being so common a salutation that it seldom or ever induces the person so kindly warned to turn round and look for the missing luminary.

I can only say we had a run, a right good one. I was carried *well*, and thanks to following those who were of sterner mould than myself, in a most satisfactory place during a greater portion of the time. A fall, with the loss of a stirrup-leather, and a bad turn, chiefly owing to the forbidding appearance of a certain hog-backed style, extinguished my chance for the remainder; but I came up in time to see a most gallant and straightforward fox properly accounted for and

eaten, and went back to Melton wonderfully well satisfied with myself and Grey-friar. Pretty well for a Nogo this! I thought. Besides which, I had met one or two acquaintances, made another by catching his horse, and been cordially and cheerfully invited to dinner by an utter stranger to me, but one of whose hospitality and amiable qualities I had often heard; so that altogether I was what people call well pleased with my day's work, and went to my dressing-room with far different feelings from those which I had experienced in the same locality twenty-four hours before. I was no longer shy of the waiters; I sent for my groom, and *gave* him his orders instead of accepting them from him, somewhat to his astonishment. I felt free of the place; I had actually survived a run in Leicestershire; the fences were not so fearful as I had supposed. People were civil to me; I was going to a pleasant dinner; and, in short, everything was "*couleur de rose*."

CHAPTER IV.

“ There was a goodly soupe à la bonne femme,
Though whence it came from, heaven only knew,
With turbot, for relief of those who cram,
Relieved by dindon à la parigueux.
There likewise was (the sinner that I am !
How shall I get this gourmand stanza through ?)
Soupe à la beauveau, whose relief was dory,
Relieved itself by pork, for greater glory, &c.”

“ Languidus in cubitum jam se conviva reponit.”
HORAT.

I HAVE always admired the sentiments of the late Dr. Kitchener—none the less, perhaps, for the inimitable review of certain of his writings in the “Recreations of Christopher North;” but though I must needs laugh with honest Kit, I cannot laugh *at* good Dr. Kitchener, whose ideas about dinners were of the

most profound and orthodox description. "Seven o'clock is the best part of the day"—how often do we hear this remarked! and in this favoured country, where the majority of us can still get plenty to eat (long may it be so!), it is notorious that nothing can be undertaken or completed without dinner. "Dine, and pass resolutions," as Charles Matthews says. Nobody would dream of passing the resolutions without dining; in fact, there would be no resolutions to pass. The alderman going to a city-feast did not pity the mendicant who had tasted no food for four-and-twenty hours: far from it, the heroic feeling of the civic dignitary was that of envy, not commiseration. "Lucky fellow, what an appetite you must have!" was his remark. He could not realize the idea of a man having no dinner to go to; and this feeling, if analyzed, will be found to exist in all classes of the community. What is so popular as eating and drinking, on the stage? Success at the bar can only be obtained by the punctual mastication of "commons." In the army, from the days of Shakspeare downwards, when he says of Henry the Fifth's troops,

Then give them great meals of beef, and steel, and iron ; and they will eat like wolves, and fight like devils,

a good commissariat has ever been esteemed the very foundation of success ; and Lord Byron—the poet, of all others, who describes life as it is, and not as it ought to be—calls “the tocsin of the soul,” the dinner-bell. I may, therefore, be excused for confessing that I was by no means sorry to find myself, about half-past seven P.M., comfortably settled in a well-proportioned room, eating a capital dinner, drinking excellent wine, waited on by the quietest and most attentive of servants ; and though last, not least, enjoying the society of five most agreeable *convives*, the whole effect being heightened by the four red coats and two black, which gave the proper warmth and variety of colouring, and destroyed the usual sombre appearance of an exclusively male party.

Nimrod says, at Melton people never talk about hunting after dinner ; and, on this occasion, if the exception prove the rule, he was right. Certainly, the subject was duly canvassed ; and the fact of one of the party having

been laid up with a sprained ankle, and consequently unable to hunt, though not debarred from the pleasures of society, gives me an opportunity of describing our run, as it was related to him by one well qualified to give an account of everything that was done, of course interspersed with many interruptions and good things said, which must be heard to be appreciated.

Dinner was over, and the first bottle of claret beginning its genial rounds, when the conversation, which had in succession touched upon wine, politics, music, racing, painting, and the topics of the day, was more especially brought round to the subject of hunting by the lame gentleman, thus throwing himself on the mercy of the company :

“ Well, now, somebody tell me about the run to-day ; for, except your having found at Barkby, and run for fifty-two minutes, I can get no further intelligence : and this was only from my servant, who told me the day before yesterday there was what he calls ‘ a splendid hunt ’—that they found at Owston Wood, and killed at Launde, which, as I know the distance to be three-quarters of a mile, has rather shaken my confidence in his reports of sport.”

“ Well, I’ll tell you,” said O—, filling him-

self a bumper of '34, a vintage of which he had already expressed his decided approval. "We drew all the morning without finding; and had it not been for Barkby Holt to fall back upon, we should have regretted losing so promising-looking a day. However, the Holt is a pretty sure find; and I must say, I, for one, never gave way to despondency about it. They found immediately a brace of foxes. I was standing in the middle ride, and viewed a fellow across, with a tag to his brush like the white flag of a rear-admiral; and, thinks I, he looks like going—I hope they will settle to *him*. Sure enough, though there was a holloa at the upper end, this was the fox they were running; and I had hardly listened for ten seconds when I heard them turning towards me, and presently they crossed close to my horse's feet. Another holloa at the bottom, and down the ride came Ben, blowing for his life; and though his horse put both his feet in a hole, and went end-over-end with him, he never took the horn from his mouth, but kept striving to toot, though his trumpet was stuffed up with dirt. He was with them again directly; and by the time I could get to the end of the wood, the hounds were streaming away

over the next field, pointing for Ashby Folville, and with all the appearance of a capital scent. I saw W—, of course, get a start, and I rode two fields to him; and I believe, Mr. Nogo, was of some service to you in saving you a fall."

I bowed my thanks, as the fact is, the young one was so eager that I was forced to let him have his own way; and when my obliging friend holloaed to me, I was going straight for the corner of the field, at a good-sized fence, on the other side of which I afterwards ascertained there was a large, deep pond.

"What a fellow W— is to get a start!" said our host: "he never loses a chance; and what a pace he gets his horses along—he knows so well how to make them gallop!"

I may here be allowed to tell an anecdote of the noble lord alluded to, which, I think, illustrates not only quickness and decision, but a degree of judgment as to pace which must be invaluable in a race. Hounds were running really fast over the finest part of Leicestershire, and were nearly a field a-head of any one. Lord W—, with several others, jumped into a large grass field, at the further end of which, and between them and the hounds, was a strong, black-looking fence, that, on a nearer

approach, was found to be impracticable. There was but one place in it, and that was made up of four stiff rails, with a soft green spot to land in, that looked very like a certain fall; and add to this, a large herd of frightened bullocks rushing down towards it. His mind was made up as quickly as his eye glanced towards the place. He had ridden too many races not to know exactly when to "come;" and, conscious he was on a fast one, he "sat down, and set to." It was a capital race. The leading bullock ran remarkably stout; but the noble lord beat him by a length: and although he came heels-over-head in the bog on the further side, that was nothing, and another minute saw him gracefully sailing over the opposite rise, well compensated for a dirty coat by the knowledge that some twenty of his most intimate friends were at that moment fussing, fuming, and swearing behind him, hemmed in by the herd of oxen that effectively stopped up their only egress, and with the comfortable knowledge that, if hounds only went on running as they appeared to be inclined to do, and as they afterwards really did, they would be "nowhere," and not one of them would ever again catch more than a

glimpse of Lord W—'s horse's well-squared tail, till all the fun was over—which eventually turned out to be the case.

But to return to the run :

“Nogo, the wine is with you.” Having restored the circulation of the fluids, unconsciously impeded by my inattention, O— proceeded. “He had no intention of paying Ashby Folville a visit, but, leaving it on his right, made as straight as a line for Ashby Pasture ; and they really went such a trimming pace over the grass, that I began to think twenty minutes would finish the whole thing. However, when we arrived at the wood, it was evident he had no objection to its shelter from being too warm ; for into it he went, and out again at the further end, like a shot. I galloped down the outside, keeping the wood on my right, as hard as I could lick, and arrived at the corner just as the hounds came out. Away they flashed, straight across the opposite enclosure, and then up went all their heads at once—much, I confess, to my relief ; for, had I not been able to get a pull then, I was beginning to wonder how much longer my horse could live at the pace of an express train. The Baronet, who had gone through

with the hounds, had hold of them in a second, and, casting them short to the left, and down wind, showed that he knew pretty well the nature of the animal, and whereabouts Cream Lodge was. Sure enough, that was his point, for they hit it off immediately; and, notwithstanding one field quite full of sheep, who, in their usual warlike manner, had formed squadrons, and charged right across his line, and another of oxen, they hunted it merrily on, at a good holding pace, nearly up to the gorse. Here, I fancy, he must have been headed from his line; for, with no apparent reason that we could make out, they turned again to the right, leaving the gorse two fields upon the left. I saw rather a good thing happen just at this point. A young man on a neatish-looking, well-bred horse, who had been going uncommonly well, but I suppose had pumped him out in doing so, jumped manfully into a double post-and-rail fence, with the laudable intention of doing it at twice. The ditch, however, between the rails, though dry, was deep, and the further timber looked high and strong; and when "*in*," like her Majesty's Ministers, the thing was, how to get him "*out*." Off he got, and, sitting on the oppo-

site rail, proceeded to pull manfully at his head. The fish was safely hooked, and the line at its utmost stretch, when crack went the rail on which my friend was leaning for a purchase: at the same moment his horse, who had been making up his mind for a final effort, jumped gallantly at his falling owner, and, knocking him completely over, with one fore-leg through his hat, he dragged him prostrate into the field, only to leave him there with the reins safe in his grasp, but, thanks to a treacherous head-stall, nothing else remaining to him of his "*monture*." Whether he is still in that field, trying to catch the runaway, and singing,

‘The last links are broken that bound me to thee,’

I have not since had time to ascertain. The pace improved considerably before we got to the Melton and Leicester road, but not enough to prevent two northern gentlemen, both heavy weights, from jumping a high, strong gate into it; and from our fox having turned down the road we had here another trifling check. By-the-bye, I saw a good many fellows looking out for their second horses just about this time; but unless they had been ordered to

patrol between Melton and Brooksby, I do not see that there was much reason to expect them. When the hounds hit it off again, and really got their heads down in the grass meadows near the river, away they went faster than ever, straight across the middle of the fields, dashing through those thick fences as if they were paper instead of blackthorn ; there was no chance of a pull or even a turn, and the natural consequence was the falls began to get plentiful ; I, for one, got a most imperial crowner in what I believe to have been a second ditch ; but the fact is, old Golightly was blown, and I had been expecting it for one or two fields. However, they did us a good turn in crossing the river not very far from the bridge, so there was no swimming, or jealousy as to who should be “ in first ;” and again turning towards us on the further side enabled us to be on pretty comfortable terms with them. (Once more bell rings, “ More claret.”) Well, they never checked again ; I don’t think I ever remember so gallant a fox. I viewed him travelling across the grass-fields below Hoby, as if he never meant to give in ; but he began to run short when we got near Rakedale, and after coursing him up one

hedge-row and down another, they fairly ran into him in the open, just one field from Thrussington Wolds; time exactly fifty-six minutes; and the distance with '*the compasses, mind, on the Ordnance map*' eight miles, from point to point. I think we ought to drink the Baronet's health and his hounds."

This was done justice to, as may be supposed, in a bumper; and the conversation turned upon what L. called the humours of the day.

"Who was that in the brook just after we left Barkby? I never saw such fun. His horse tried to refuse it, and the man forced him; and after sliding six yards at least, in he went overhead"

"Why that was me," said A.; "he is a capital brook-jumper, but a farmer crossed me, and put me out of my stride as I was coming down to it; and being young, and a thoroughbred one to boot, he won't bear contradiction, and I was too happy to compound by doing it at two stages."

"Well, you lost no time," said C., "for I saw you at Ashby, and never remarked you were wet."

“How well G. went to-day; what a rattling good horse that is!”

“*Well*, did you ever know him go otherwise? He is the finest rider I ever saw; and no one would suppose he was going out of a canter till they came to gallop alongside of him.”

“How well your horse jumped that gate into the Leicester-road, C.!” said L.; “I would not have ridden at it for fifty pounds.”

“Oh, yes, you would, my dear fellow: it was not much of a gate; the taking off was so sound. But he really is a very good horse: I have now hunted him ten seasons, and he has certainly not given me ten falls.”

“Not much of a gate?” thought I; “well, I saw it, and it appeared to me at least a foot too high: certainly, these fellows *do* ride.”

“I hope you like Leicestershire, Mr. Nogo,” said my neighbour. “That seemed a nice sort of horse you were riding, and appeared to carry you well.”

“Like it!” I replied, “I am delighted with it. I never before knew what it was to see a run almost entirely over grass; and although to-day I certainly did not see more than half

the run to my satisfaction, I am so pleased that I do not think I shall ever hunt anywhere else."

"Well said, Mr. Nogo," said our host. "Will anybody have any more claret, or shall we go up-stairs? There's whist for those who like it, and weeds if fellows want to smoke."

Not being much of a whist-player, and having done justice to my hospitable landlord's claret, I preferred the latter, and accompanied him to a most luxurious divan; where, ere I had fairly lighted my Havanna and mixed a small modicum of brandy and soda in an enormous tumbler, we were joined by several men whom I had that morning met in the hunting-field, and who had dropped in to smoke one cigar and have a chat before going to bed; amongst others, the gentleman whose horse I had caught in the morning, and who was profuse in his acknowledgments for so trifling a favour. What an evening we had! Songs, good stories, laughter, and that cordial good-humour which so generally influences an assemblage of sportsmen, of whatever rank, the highest as well as the lowest, served to keep the fun alive; two or three sang remarkably well, and everything which admitted of a

chorus was most harmoniously appreciated. One song, which actually, I believe, charmed away the whist-players from their game by the manner in which it was sung, in one of the richest and sweetest voices I ever heard an unprofessional gifted with, rang in my ears for months afterwards ; it was to the air of " Some love to roam o'er the dark sea foam," and was, in fact, a mere parody on that song, but being devoted to the sport we were all assembled to enjoy, would have been popular, even if sung by a very moderate performer ; and delivered as it was, in the sweetest of tones, and with a taste and expression that is seldom met with, no wonder it charmed us all ; and I, who had never heard it before, or met with it elsewhere, was naturally more delighted than any one. This must be my excuse for giving, as nearly as I can recollect, the words of the "*chanson* ;" should they ever meet the author's eye, he will, I am sure, "*excuse errors*," when he recollects I was listening "*arrectis auribus*," under the combined influence of claret, smoke, and the brandy and soda-water before mentioned, and this confession, I trust, will " bear me harmless."

Some love to ride o'er the flowing tide,
And dash through the pathless sea ;
But the steed's brave bound, and the opening hound,
And the rattling burst for me.
Some track the deer o'er the mountain clear ;
But though wary the stalker's eye,
Be it mine to speed o'er the grassy mead,
And ride to a scent breast-high.
Breast-high, &c.

There are those that love all the joys to prove,
That crowd in the mantling bowl ;
Who bow to the nod of the Thracian god,
And yield him up their soul.
Some speed the ball through the lamp-lit hall,
With music and revel free ;
Or woo beauty's glance in the mazy dance,
But the joys of the chase for me.
For me, &c.

When we mount and away at the break of day,
And we hie to the woodland side ;
How the crash resounds as we cheer our hounds,
And still at their sterns we ride.
Then at dewy eve, when our sport we leave,
And the board we circle round,
How each boasts the speed of his fastest steed,
And the dash of his favourite hound.
His hound, &c.

Then those that will, may the bumper fill,
Or trace out the dance with glee ;

But the steed's brave bound, and the opening hound,
And the rattling burst for me.

For me, &c.

When I got back to my room at night, and saw my snowy leathers and well-cleaned boots placed in readiness for the morn, can it be wondered that I went to my couch humming "the steed's brave bound, and the opening hound"? Talking of boots, there is a great deal of countenance in a well-made boot; and a friend of mine always turns his with the toes to the wall during a prolonged frost: he says he cannot bear to see them looking him in the face.

CHAPTER V.

“ Can honour set a broken leg ? ”

Falstaff.

PLEASANTLY the days rolled on. What with moderate sport in the morning, fine weather, and occasionally the cheering influence of ladies' society in the field, sometimes on horseback, sometimes in pony carriages, together with the crowd of horsemen, which, besides the coffee-house of the thing, was so convenient to hide in, when the nerves were not quite sufficiently braced; and it was pleasanter to ride amongst a gentlemanlike set of men who opened gates, and knew the country and the bridle-roads, than to go rasping, and bruising, and hustling, and screwing amongst another

set of men, fewer in number certainly, and equally gentlemanlike, but who would never allow either that the pace was as good, or the fences as stiff, or the run as satisfactory, as I imagined it in my inexperience to be. Pleasant all this certainly was ; and my horses, with the exception of Barabbas, turning out good ones ; my cards at whist, which I soon ventured on, being generally favourable, my evenings being spent in eating good dinners in good society, and playing short whist, holding good cards, I began to think that the good things of this world were more attainable than I had formerly supposed, and that I was settling down into a most agreeable mode of life, when, as ill luck—or rather my evil genius, who seldom leaves me alone for long—would have it, I must needs write up to London to ask Segundo to come down and stay a week with me.

Melton, February 12th, 18—.

DEAR SEGUNDO,

My horses are pretty sound, and the meets next week are so good, that I am induced to hope you will do me the favour of coming down and spending a week with me here. I shall be happy to mount you, and hope you will like the stud I have got together. Your old friend

Barabbas is looking remarkably well. Pray write a line as soon as possible.

I remain,

My dear Segundo,

Yours very truly,

Alfred Segundo, Esq.

T. NOGO.

(Exact Copy.)

Such was my courteous and civil epistle to my friend, whom I have already introduced to the reader as the original promoter of my expedition into Leicestershire, and the former owner of the calumniated bay horse. When I call him my friend, it must be understood in the most general acceptation of the word, as I never could exactly make out who Segundo was. The style of man, perhaps, will be more easily inferred from his answer to my sober and gentlemanlike invitation.

“ I’m there, old boy ! Come to the station for me on Sunday, there’s a brick ! don’t be late. Thanks for the mounts. I’ll show the nags how to go. Good-bye, old slow-coach.

“ Yours (in liquor),

“ A. SEGUNDO.”

Now I appeal to any disinterested observer whether this was not a most improper letter.

I, who hate to be old-fellowed, and patted, and patronized, and slapped on the back, and all that sort of thing, to be called "a brick" and a slow-coach too ! (I despise the inuendo about the horses); and then to be ordered to the station like a servant ! my blood quite boiled ; but somehow there are some men that may do anything they like, and that one always gives in to. Here was Segundo ; he smoked my cigars, borrowed my money, dined with me at clubs, was good enough to occupy my stall at the opera in the summer, and the box I generally secured at the Lyceum in the winter (to the latter he invariably brought a party of both sexes), and all this as if I was the individual obliged, and he the person conferring the favour. But so it always is : of every two persons that associate, one will be the master-mind, or, what describes the imposition still better, will get the upper hand of the other. So it is when boys *go partners at school* ; so invariably in the partnership for life of man and wife, and even in the dumb creation. Any man unfortunate enough to be addicted to the amusement of gunning must have observed how if Don and Ponto, pride of their respective kennels, be enlarged together to

scare the coveys from a turnip-field, either Don will take the initiative, and go through all the forms of snuffling, staring, galloping backwards and forwards, and then stopping dead short in an instructive and most constrained attitude, whilst Ponto confines himself to a careful imitation of these exciting manœuvres, called by the professionals *backing*; or else *vice versá*, Ponto becoming fogleman, and Don being content to corroborate him. Yet when either of these sagacious animals meets poor Bang, he immediately assumes the command, and Bang, whose own master would not part with him for untold gold, sinks without a struggle into dummy at once. Thus was I invariably Bang in Segundo's society; yet I could not do without him, and though rather slang, and not the most high-bred fellow in the world, he certainly was an agreeable companion, with a flow of spirits and readiness of humour seldom met with.

My first introduction to him was on the race-course at Landsdown, during one of the Bath meetings, when I was smitten with admiration at the extremely scientific style in which he won a hurdle-race on an inferior-looking screw; I believe it was a match, and

put a hundred pounds into his pocket; I afterwards met him at the Red House, where I saw him knocking the pigeons about in so artistical a manner that I was induced to back him to win a sweepstakes, which took five pound out of mine. There being a difficulty about getting back to London, he kindly undertook to scull me down in a wherry, and being *au fait* at most things, succeeded in landing me safely at Westminster, somewhat alarmed by the voyage and drenched to the skin by the swell we encountered from every passing steamer. Two or three Greenwich dinners, at which I enacted Amphitryon, cemented our acquaintance, and a few weeks saw him as completely installed in my cab and free of my lodgings as if we had been brothers in blood and affection, who had never been separated from our infancy. With all this, I never succeeded in discovering his previous history: whether he had a father and mother; whether he was born a gentleman or a clown, though his appearance hardly favoured the latter supposition; whether he ever *had* any private fortune, or what part of England he originally came from—all these

antecedents were to me an impenetrable mystery. I fancy he had seen some service, for he appeared to be well up in most military matters, but certainly not in our army; and though I inclined to think he might have been a Queen of Spain's man, yet his knowledge of German airs and fondness for hock somewhat weakened this theory by the counter-supposition of a campaign with an Austrian hussar regiment—no bad beginning for a man of the world. All my enquiries were parried with a joke, a laugh, a song, or a sell, and I am still as much in the dark as ever. He was a good-looking fellow, spare and muscular; about six feet high; with a most voluminous pair of black curling whiskers, and a quick, searching eye, that nothing could escape. Just the sort of man everybody says is “deuced good-looking,” but nobody “a deuced gentleman-like fellow.” There was a something—a sort of restlessness, although accompanied with plenty of *sang froid*, that belied the appearance of high birth which his features and figure alone would have given him; and his dress, which partook largely of “the sporting,” quite set at rest the question as to whether Mr.

Nogo's friend was the sort of person you would be anxious to introduce to your family, and make at once free of your house.

Like the inimitable Daly in "Gilbert Gurney," Segundo was a dab at everything, and whether it was boating, cricketing, driving, riding races, fishing (with most people such a pleasant fiction), running, jumping, or swimming, land and water, it was all the same to him; at each and all of these he was as thorough a proficient as if he had studied nothing else. I don't know where he went to school, but certainly they taught many accomplishments to an apt pupil who had the education of Segundo. He could work cross-stitch or play skittles; slang a bargeman or perform creditably on the piano-forte; might have made a comfortable income with the pea and thimble in the palmy days of that exciting amusement; dance, fence, draw caricatures, sing a capital after-dinner song, and conjure better than any one I ever saw, except "the Wizard of the North," that mighty magician, of whom nothing shall ever convince me that he is not in close partnership with another skilful deceiver, who shall be nameless. The latter accomplishment proved a fund of amuse-

ment to a party of us returning on one occasion from Doncaster races. We had some miles to go after leaving the train, through a bleak country on a dark night; and a heavy fall of rain made it necessary to perform the rest of our journey in a post-chaise. One of these vehicles we found at the station; but not being "with horses, Lady Clutterbuck," as "Used Up" says, we were obliged to wait till they could be procured from the nearest town. We were not sorry, therefore, to espy a blazing fire in the tap-room of an adjacent pot-house, and to its cheerful warmth we speedily betook ourselves, there to smoke our cigars and enjoy whatever amusement the passing hour might supply. We found the room full of stalwart Yorkshire countrymen, sedulously employed in moistening their sturdy clay, and in the intervals of a warm discussion concerning "t' Moog" and "t' Mare," for it was in Alice Hawthorn's day, watching the progress of a game at "all-fours," which was being played by two of the competitors with as greasy and well-thumbed a pack of cards as the North Riding could supply, but which game, nevertheless, they were pondering over with all the consideration some people think it necessary

to bestow on chess. In came Segundo, and after a pleasant interchange of compliments with the rest of the party, down he sat to play the winner at all-fours. I do not understand the principle of this noble game, but from what I could gather he did something with the knave, which they denominated "the jack," that secured his winning every point, and all the wagers being laid in "pots," he had won enough beer before he got up, to have started him at once in a flourishing business as a publican. Much were the Yorkshiremen puzzled at finding one so "far north," as they say; and the more so from his antagonist being not supposed to confine himself entirely to playing on the square. But their astonishment was not destined to end here; for Segundo, shuffling the pack with the true pliancy of finger that betokens a professor of the science of legerdemain, quietly demanded what any one would lay that a particular card being drawn and replaced with the rest, he should without seeing that card or moving from his chair, by one simple sentence cause it to nail itself against the opposite door, some fifteen feet from where he was sitting. The Yorkshiremen looked at one another, and

seemed inclined to consider this a slight display of braggadocio, and the investments of the party on the "Moog" having been for the most part favourable, and there being no lack of capital, they seemed to think this a good opportunity to get home after their reverses at all-fours. Well, they laid him crown pieces, and goes of brandy, and pots of beer, and every sort of wager rapidly, and the excitement was beginning to equal that which had accompanied the St. Leger we had just been to see. Segundo shuffled the pack, and proffered it to the patriarch of the parish to draw from—a shrewd, white-haired old man, who during the whole performance never took his keen eye off Segundo's countenance. Warily he drew a card, which they crowded to look at, and which turned out to be the ace of hearts; and cautiously he replaced it in the pack, apparently satisfied that it was impossible the conjuror could have *seen* what it was, at all events. Segundo now shuffled the cards, and begged his nearest neighbour, a giant in a smock-frock, to *cut*; this the giant did with a tremulousness that showed he was not in the habit of patronizing such amusements, the ex-

citement all this time becoming intense. Another shuffle, and our wizard, whose pliancy of voice almost amounted to ventriloquism, began chanting a chorus from a Greek play, that seemed to the astonished rustics to be an incantation coming down the chimney. *Θελω λεγειν ατρειδας* must have been to their ears as incomprehensible as their own dialect would be to those of the "regius professor;" and then with one prolonged crack, in which each individual card had its share, away went the whole pack skimming across the room, whiz past the head of the astonished patriarch, bang against the wooden door, where they burst like a shell, scattering themselves gracefully around, and leaving the ace of hearts transfixed to the aforesaid partition, with his face to the company, and sticking, actually sticking up there before their astonished gaze!

I never saw people so amazed; I believe they thought us all "*uncanny*;" and although there was a slight reaction in our favour consequent upon Segundo's refusal to take their money, which was honestly proffered in payment of their wagers, I gathered from the old farmer's parting "*bon mot*" what was the

general opinion of our friend ; for on his taking the reins from the charioteer, who had by this time put horses to the desolate post-chaise, and my impressing on him the necessity of our arriving that night at our destination, “ Mind, we must be there by twelve o’clock,” I heard the old gentleman mutter to his next neighbour, the timorous giant in the smock-frock, “ Moost ! aye, sure enough, needs moost when t’devil droives.”

The trick, though I believe one of the commonest “ on the cards,” had evidently then for the first time penetrated into the recesses of the North Riding.

Segundo was as good as his word, and made his appearance on the Sunday following my invitation, as I fully expected he would do. In fact, I have never known an occasion on which he has declined a proffered invitation when anything like good fun or good quarters were likely to be obtained by it. I did not go to the station for him, contenting myself with sending Stubbs and the dog-cart to wait upon him. I afterwards understood from that worthy that he astonished him not a little by taking off successively every article of harness and replacing the whole upon a different

system, informing Stubbs at intervals that he knew no more of putting a horse into single harness than a cow did of a pair of breeches, with several other pleasantries of a like nature, more lively than respectful, but which, instead of mortally offending my master-of-the-horse, as I should have supposed they would, only seemed to increase his respect for the strange gentleman.

We dined *tête-à-tête*, but some fellows came in afterwards, and Segundo, who was on his good behaviour, was most agreeable and amusing. I could see he was getting quite popular with the two or three people who joined us for half an hour before going to bed, one of whom invited us both to dinner the following day, and I rather gave myself credit for having asked such an acquaintance down to Melton, and swaggered up to bed pleased with my evening, feeling quite keen about the morrow, and, above all, congratulating myself on my invitation and hospitality. "Let me see—Segundo shall ride Catamount, and I'll have Phiz out first horse, and Barabbas second;" inwardly resolving that, if I could possibly help it, I would not lay my leg over the latter except to ride home upon. Blind

mortals that we are ! I dreamt that night that I won the Liverpool steeple-chase on a buffalo.

“ Forrard, forrard, forrard ! too, too, too ! ” from the noble master ; “ Get forrard, hounds, get forrard ! ” from a most varmint-looking whip ; whilst Goodall, cap in hand, and boiling with excitement, comes galloping up the ride, just in time to view his fox stealing along over the opposite field, before the ridge hides him from his mortal enemy. He has them out of covert in a twinkling ; they settle down, notwithstanding the hurry and uproar, every hound to his fox ; and away they go as if there could be no doubt about their being in for a rattler. How well they look with their spotted sides against the bright greensward ! somehow the grass always looks a richer green when hounds are running over it. Now they reach the fence ; but ere that lucky fellow on the grey horse has crashed into the next field with them, three couple are already through, and before he can again settle into his stride they are scouring away all together fifty yards a-head of him. What a scene it is ! Already the line of horsemen is completely broken ; some dozen are riding *for themselves*, the rest we have no time to look at. The best rider

in England is sailing away, almost alongside the hounds, and by this time appears to skim over the fences in the distance as though they were *straws*. The eleven other "best in Englanders" are riding most wickedly to overhaul him. On the right I see a bay horse very artistically handed over a hog-backed stile with a foot-board; the whole being done at a slapping pace. The chestnut of course cannot condescend to follow ("Oh! no, mustn't pull a horse out of his stride," is the excuse); and slap he goes at "*the loneliest spot*." Ah! I thought it was a certainty; up went a very handsome switch-tail, and from the total disappearance on the farther side I fancy he has got "*one*." Forty thousand miles an hour comes a light-weight, who not getting a very good start, and being confident of his horse's pace, is now making up for lost time; he don't seem to know that gate will open. Well jumped, by the powers! I should like to have that horse. That's a thrusting fellow in black; a parson of course; he got deuced well away with them, and though he has had two ox-fences in his line, he is still going close to the hounds, and on most comfortable terms with them. On the left are two thorough-bred ones, apparently

racing : watch how like clockwork they rise and fall over the fences alongside each other, whilst hardly a length in the rear comes a fifteen-stone gentleman, making the most of every inch of his ground, and living the pace with the best of them. A little beyond these again, on the left, is a man riding his own line, with the hounds turning towards him, who bids fair, if things go on so, soon to have the best of it. What a clever horse that looks, and how well he jumped the timber under the tree and the double beyond that ! There he goes again—ah ! safe over with a scramble. By Jove, it's Segundo ; no it is'nt ; yet it is —Segundo and the young one !

Such was my mental soliloquy as I watched what bid fair to be one of the best things of the season from Freeby-wood. We had found instantaneously, and to my unspeakable discomfiture I had ascertained that Phiz was so lame it would be impossible to ride him ; there was nothing for it but Barabbas ; and what with the delay, and the disgust, and one thing and another, I was reduced to the unenviable position of a looker-on, who, however much he may proverbially “ see most of the

game," does not in fox-hunting see the only part of the beholding which is supposed to be satisfactory—namely, the hounds; as no credit whatever attaches to the being able to tell your friends, "Here you were down," or "Here you funk'd;" from the bare relation of these facts proving of itself that the eyewitness must have been behind, and consequently in a worse place than the sportsman he calumniates. My situation in the road, though humble, was secure; and I am not sure that, mounted as I was, I should have been at all anxious to exchange places even with the foremost horseman. Defend me from riding Barabbas in front of the sort of people before whom one *must* go; no excuse for shirking, no excuse for pulling; hounds running, and your friends *behind* you, with nothing for it but a thick bullfinch, the further side *uncertain*, or four strong bars and a slippery take-off for choice. I know the sort of thing exactly, and therefore was not so very much discontented to find myself trotting along a remarkably sound lane (and to do Barabbas justice, he *is* a good hack), with the laudable intention of seeing as much as I could without

unnecessary danger, and, if possible, falling in with those pilots for the "*tailers*," the second horses.

I was never, as the reader has by this time found out, very famous for my luck ; and though I trotted to this rising ground and cantered to that, opened a gate here and walked through a gap there, I was unsuccessful either in finding the second horses aforesaid (whose dark mass had often before proved a beacon in my distress), or in making out at all the line of the run. First I went one way and then another, till having wandered about as near as I could guess for an hour, the well-known twang of the horn caught my ear, and ere I had time to turn in the direction of the sound, the whole Field burst upon my sight, standing quietly in the middle of an enclosure some half-a-mile off ; having, as I afterwards found, had a very satisfactory run of five-and-twenty minutes, and killed their fox within two fields of the wood where they found him. Of course I joined them ; and having accounted for myself with the usual excuses of bad start, first horse lame, second horse difficult to find, &c., I shared my sandwich and sherry with Segundo, gave him a capital cigar,

and disregarding his repeated entreaties that I would ride the young horse, that he was quite fresh, that Barabbas would be delighted to have his old master on him again, &c., I manfully rode on to see them draw for another fox—some busy devil within me whispering that I really must make an attempt to ride this time; that I had not *gone* a run for a fortnight; that people would think I funkcd; and, in short, that come what might, I must give Barabbas an opportunity of going if he could, which, I confess, he had never done yet. Then Segundo told me sundry stories how he had ridden him over this fence with *the stag*, and over that brook with the H. H., and a wonderful place that was measured out larking: more fool he! thought I. So that all this, and the impostor himself carrying me very pleasantly over two or three small fences, going from covert to covert, got my courage up wonderfully; and I determined to shove him along—without, however, expressing my devout wish that there might be no occasion to do so. Alas! if Fortune favours the bold, she is not always so accommodating with the shy. A quicker find than before, and the first half-mile all down hill was extremely trying to my

nerves on a heavy-shouldered animal with a bad mouth ; but thanks to Segundo's good-nature and quickness, for he piloted me for some time, I got a capital start, and was well with them for two or three fields. "*Vires acquirit eundo*," is wonderfully true about riders, though it may not hold quite so good with their horses ; and on my jumping into a large flat meadow with every appearance of a brook in the middle of it, I had not an idea of refusing. Barabbas's blood was up ; and the brook being a mild one, I negotiated it so energetically as narrowly to miss jumping on my own horse's back, and annihilating my friend, who had ridden my young one at it a trifle too slow in front of me. It was getting delightful ; my sensations were like those of a man in a dream, and I really felt as if I was "doing the trick : " how pleasant to have this six days in the week ! On we went, the fences getting rather stiffer ; Barabbas much excited, and somewhat blown. A high, strong blackthorn fence in front of me, not a very good take off, and Segundo pulling the young one well together for the weakest place in it, where, behind him as I was, I could spy it was strengthened with a most treacherous rail.

Over went the young one ; and Segundo, looking back, shouted something, I know not what. I was coming hand over hand towards the fence ; I made a desperate effort to collect Barabbas, but I could feel him setting his mouth as if it was cast-iron, and in amongst the unsound ground he went like a bull : it stopped our way a little, but not enough to save us, and I have a most vivid recollection of the rail, which on a nearer inspection looked quite strong enough to turn us both over.

* * * * *

The next thing I remember was being bled by candlelight in my room at Melton, where I was gracefully reclining on my back, with a fractured collar-bone and something very like a concussion of the brain ; whilst Segundo, who was explaining the circumstances to the doctor and an inquiring friend, finished his apparently exciting history with a few disjointed observations, amongst which my ears were regaled with sentences such as the following : “ No fault of the nag’s ; told him to ride slow at it ; worst horseman in England,” with something about a child and a donkey, which a second fainting-fit prevented my quite catching the meaning of.

Hunting was out of the question for the rest of the season; and after a fortnight of bed at Melton I betook myself to London, where it was a good six weeks before I was sufficiently restored even to be questioned about my accident. However, it is an ill-wind that blows nobody any good, and Segundo had the horses to ride till the end of the season, which he seems to have done most gallantly, and, as he wrote me word, with no further casualty than one broken back. I never heard, however, that he could go so well on Barabbas as on any of the others.

CHAPTER VI.

CROCKFORD'S,

Here the blithe youngster, just returned from Spain,
Cuts the light pack, or calls the rattling main ;
The jovial caster's set, and seven's the nick,
Or done a thousand on the coming trick.

BYRON.

“DON'T drink Lady Dowdy's champagne, Nogo. I know where she gets it. Let's go to Crocky's, and have some supper there: this thing's getting a bore,” said a voice at my elbow, as I proffered an empty tumbler to be filled with champagne and Seltzer-water by one of Countess Dowdy's officials, in a voluminous white waistcoat; and, turning to my timely monitor, I recognized handsome Jack Raffle-ton, a young guardsman who had lately been kind enough to patronize me considerably, and

whose hospitality at the expense of Government I had repeatedly enjoyed, at his bivouac in St. James's Palace. "Come along, old fellow! I'll drive you down to St. James's-street. I've kept my cab waiting, and it's past twelve o'clock; so, forward!"

I had just been elected a member of the club alluded to. Alas! even then had its glories begun to pale. The great financier, who gave his name to that stately pile, had ceased to superintend the phalanx of Fortune's worshippers, though they still hovered round her shrine. His course was almost run, and 'twas whispered that only the talismanic name of Rattan held his mighty spirit in its chains of clay. Had the owner died, the nomination of a first favourite for the Derby must have been void; and, despite of doctors, Crockford lingered on. The Wednesday came; and Rattan was nowhere. True, he succumbed to a four-year-old—and I *have* heard that it requires a very good four-year-old to win a Derby; but the second place was filled, and the third; and ere Orlando's owner had received the stakes, the earthly career of one of the greatest speculators of modern times was closed for ever. Shortly before these events, I had been elected

a member of Crocky's, familiarly so called; but, in the verdancy of my youth, and the bashfulness of my inexperience, I had never yet ventured within the precincts of the club, and I was not sorry to make my *débüt* under the wing of so auspicious a patron as Jack Raffleton, who knew everybody, was hand-and-glove with dukes, earls, legs, millionaires, and spendthrifts, and upon a fixed income of £400 per annum, and a fluctuating one, depending, as he said, on public events, meaning Derbies, Legers, Cambridgeshires, &c., contrived to keep his hunters at Melton, and his day and night horse for his cab in London, to say nothing of his "*menus plaisirs*"—I should think, no trifle, though, truth to tell, his great friends did pull him through occasionally. He was very popular—could ride "like a bird," and, winning or losing, was always perfectly good-humoured and gentlemanlike—qualifications which, in this wicked world, cover a multitude of sins. Whilst Jack was fumbling for his cigar-case, and shaking out his "gibus," I cast a longing, lingering look behind. I had spent a pleasant evening; and even now, the white shoulder and dark ringlets of her with whom I had

danced my last quadrille almost tempted me back to the ball-room. A strain of Jullien's loveliest melody, "The Olga," was vibrating on my ear; and nothing but Jack's exclamation, that "that eternal waltz made him sick," and the extreme irritation and impatience of his "night-horse"—an animal that had been twice in harness, and originally drafted from the hunting-stable on account of his violent disposition—induced me to leave the fascinating scene. As we hurried through the hall, we met Lord Dribble-die returning from the cloak-room, on his way up-stairs; and as he passed Jack, I saw, by the curious vibration of wrist and elbow with which he signalized him, that a perfect understanding reigned between the two, though I was as yet ignorant of the interpretation of this masonic sign. Bang goes the apron of the cab; and the black horse, standing well up on end, throws himself into his collar, and dashes off. I can see by the action of Jack's white kids against the dark lining of the carriage, that he is pulling a good one; and one or two close shaves of a lamp-post, and consequent "slews" (as they say in a sledge) in a lateral direction across the next street, help to convince me that, though I am

being coached by a workman, it is even betting whether we reach Piccadilly without a smash. However, it does not do to *say* you are afraid; so I sit still, and talk about Epsom and Ascot, as if I was at ease in my arm-chair. It is a lovely night—the wooden pavement opposite the White Horse Cellar as dry as a bone—and, whisking round the corner where, day and night, stands that Charon of sweepers, with his engaging bow and his red waistcoat, we take a pull at the black horse opposite the old Guards' Club, on the well-worn steps of which, ensigns in white paletots stand smoking their temperate tobacco in the midnight air, and bring him up all standing at the broad portals of our princely pandemonium. Some sitting on the balustrades, some grouped on the flags, some picking their careful way over from White's, are assembled what the *Morning Post* calls "the *élite* of the fashionable world," though the majority of them owe their least claim to distinction to what is called fashion. Lounging round that door are men whose names you will see in every morning paper you may take up—names that the future history of our country shall record on her undying page. Statesmen, warriors, authors, diplo-

matists, a foreign prince or two, noble lords, and wealthy commoners, mingled with younger brothers, agreeable *roués*, *attachés*, and guardsmen—but all gentlemen, and, with few exceptions, bearing the stamp of gentle birth on their persons and features, assisted by the fact of their being extremely well-dressed. It is odd enough, but, considering how little pains he takes about it, an English gentleman is the only animal extant that really looks well-dressed in a plain evening costume. A foreigner, if he don't require padding, comes out very creditably in a uniform. Your tailor (the very man whose clothes you wear) passes muster well enough at Richmond or Blackwall; but if I wanted to find out *by his appearance* whether a stranger belonged to what are generally called the upper classes, and was only allowed to judge *by his appearance*, I say, send him upstairs to dress for dinner, give him ten minutes to do it in, and see what he looks like when he comes down at the end of it!

Following Jack's example, I left my top-coat, or whatever the flimsy sacks are called, with that Simonite, whom Jack took the greatest delight in endeavouring to puzzle. Coat after coat, as he assured me, has he borrowed,

to leave in that functionary's care ; yet so sure as he came out into the pale light of a summer's morning, on his homeward way, so sure was *that* individual coat forthcoming, and ready to protect his dissipated person. Out of the hundreds of members who nightly left their outward coverings in his charge, he was never known to make a mistake. It was no fault of his, if the wolf was ever disguised in the sheep's clothing. With him, then, I left my paletot, nothing doubting ; and, reserving my hat (which I never could understand the comfort of at supper), I followed my leader into the hall, past the weighing machine, whose index never pointed to within a stone of the actual weight, and rushing up the handsome staircase three steps at a time, I found myself in one of the most tastefully furnished drawing-rooms I ever saw—style, Louis Quatorze, and exceedingly well done. Periodicals of all sorts—everything a club generally has ; a large mirror over the fire-place ; but, like the “Palace of the White Cat,” not a soul but our two selves in it. The next room fully explained why ; and thither Jack, who was always hungry, hurried me.

I recollect when a five-act comedy, called

“Money,” came out upon the stage (I think I am right in the name, but will not be certain), the scene that, of all others, drew down the greatest amount of applause, was that in which the *dramatis personæ* pair off from the drawing-room to go to dinner, the effect being heightened by the *coup d’œil* of a dining-room, with table laid, servants in attendance, and all the glitter of lights and plate. It was managed as such “*effects*” are only on the stage; and the supper-room at Crockford’s forcibly reminded me of this popular scene. There were candelabra, epergnes, vases for fruit, plateaux for everything, and such a supper as Francatelli, with a battery of unknown range, could send up; the only difference between this and the table at Covent Garden being, that the former was surrounded by members busily occupied in discussing the good things eatable and drinkable that were before them, but, as I remarked at the time, all, without an exception, with their hats on. I *have* been told that this was the distinction between Crocky’s and “over the way.” I believe that in those unapproachable precincts men take off their hats when they go up-stairs; but the sacred rights of the ballot, and the defence of

the magic "pill," called by the uninitiated a black-ball, prevent such as me from being able to state, as an eye-witness, the manners and customs of the members of that solemn institution. Why, their very waiter in those days must have been of celestial origin by his father's side, if his likeness to the "heaven-born statesman," and his own diplomatic talents, may warrant the supposition.

But to return to Crocky's. Loud and unceasing was the confusion of tongues, honourable members being engaged in discussing every subject under the sun, in every key, from declamation abusive to whisper confidential. Politics, racing, hunting, wine, women, scandal, music, &c., with a running accompaniment of what Rabelais calls the "*cliquetis d'assiettes*," and occasionally a protracted rattle as of some small, hard substance violently agitated in a box, concluded by an inexplicable "bang!" composed altogether a *pot-pourri* which nothing in music but Jullien's Row Polka could give the slightest idea of, and which we must despair of being able to convey in sober prose. "Well, I think her singing perfection; but I can't have her acting." "Now, I don't agree with you at all: the acting is lady-like and

good, but her voice wants volume." "I took 700 to 2 about him to-day; and as for public running—" "I saw you at Richmond; and we know pretty well why you went back in the brougham—eh, old fellow?" "'Pon my soul, I should advise you to buy him: he carried me for five-and-forty minutes, as hard as ever they could go, over the finest part of Leicestershire; and I know Hardup refused two hundred for him." "Didn't quite like the picture—he can't have finished it himself; and then, that brown scarf spoils the tone altogether." "Obliged to be at Windsor, or I'd come, only I'm in waiting." "We'll go down by water, and come back in the drag—dine early, for she has to go back to sing." "No division, after all: they are taking 6 to 5 about Ministers over the way. I'll take it, I'll bet it—sure to be beat." "How she dances! By Jove, it's the most perfect thing! I like her better than Fanny Elssler in her best days." "Not half a good cook. I stayed with him a fortnight, and lost weight immensely." "Capital shooting. Bought a pack of hounds in Devonshire. Very slow huntsman." "Had a very bad night. Saw him at Rome. Went out with a Cardinal.

All hushed up." "She asked half London. Devilish bad ball. Made our party for Ascot. I'll tell you a good thing about Prince Poskywosky." "Rather you would tell me a good thing about the Derby." *Whisper, whisper.* "Give me some champagne and Seltzer-water." "Raffleton, let's go and look into the next room."

Such was the disjointed conversation that smote on my unsophisticated ear; but claret-cup and Twiss's mixture had brought me to that point at which anything in the shape of a lark is desirable, and accordingly, seeing Jack rise to make a move for the next room, as they called it, I was nothing loath to accompany him into that mysterious apartment. What a contrast with that which we had just left! Imagine a comfortable, well-proportioned room, softly carpeted, well warmed and aired, and lighted so that the glare, shaded from the eyes, was thrown brilliantly upon a green-covered table in the centre; a large screen shutting out the noise of the supper-room, and the irritating tread of footsteps passing and re-passing; a most business-like desk in one corner, behind which is seated a respectable and wealthy-looking individual, of a certain

age, who ever and anon hands a neatly-made-up packet of what look like opera-tickets to an attendant minister, proffering a wooden bowl for their reception, and then with a satisfied air appears to make an entry in a sort of ledger before him. But little furniture, and that simple and in good taste : several chairs, many of them empty, placed round the table before mentioned, on whose bright green cloth, soft and smooth as that of a billiard-table, are marked several cabalistic numerals, the words "In," "Out," and sundry lines running round the edges, too well known to the three or four men who are sitting round its surface, and one of whom has got through two princely fortunes in the study of a science to acquire which he is now squandering a third in vain. Two individuals in black preside over the solemnities, both wearing green shades, both armed with small rakes in their hands, and both having apparently no greater knowledge of their mother-tongue than is necessary for the formation of such sentences as "Take on the hand," "Seven out," "Six to five," "In with quatres" (pronounced "*caters*"), "Have a back, sir," "Make your game," "Deuce-ace," &c. ; but under whose

shades are lynx-like eyes, keen to watch the turning of a die, and brains not to be confounded by the most complicated computation of the odds. Wonderful is the worship of Mammon, and universal his sway, from the penniless *roué*, who plays *avowedly* because he has nothing to lose, to the millionaire who hopes to get his new service of plate for nothing by throwing in a hand: each plays wholly and solely to win money — money alternately the curse and the blessing of a lifetime, but ever sought after as the one thing needful to mortal man. Heed not those who make excuses for the gambler; who say—“Such a one plays, certainly; but he does it for excitement: he does not care for money; he is the most liberal man in the world; he is a capital fellow.” I tell you, *no such thing*: no man sits down to play with any idea or intention but that of *winning*; the *excitement* is the lust for gold; avarice, avarice is the passion that fills those dens most appropriately called hells; and here, amongst the high-born of the land, alas! the thirst for wealth is still unsatiated, unsatiable. Mammon is an uglier word than Fortune, but they are one and the same idol; and so blinded are their votaries,

that it is a well-known fact that several hell-keepers, conscious of the advantages that they themselves enjoy by keeping *the bank* at their own houses, being aware as they must be, better than any one, of the constant pull of the game in their favour as long as they continue only to superintend and furnish the sinews for the struggle; in short, knowing that the bank *must win*—cannot yet resist the temptation of trying their fortune as players at other tables, and placing themselves on an equality *of loss* with the multitude of dupes from whose shortsighted avarice they draw their own resources. But the play-room at Crocky's is hardly the place to moralize, however much it may furnish materials for to-morrow's waking reflections; so let us see how the system works as the ivory representatives of hundreds circulate round the table.

Who is that good-looking fellow, sweeping the dice into the box with his gloved hand, as in the full swing of success he prepares to call his fourth main? Six cool hundreds was he out, when Fortune smiled upon his endeavours, and, regardless, of the empty account at Coutts's, the outstanding bills, and the mortgaged patrimony, he “potted it on,” when he

threw in his first main, as though what he calls "pluck," and his aunt "recklessness," were a negotiable commodity, and would serve to pay his way as well as lawful coin of the realm. Once has he dribbled deuces stealthily over the baize; once has he punted cinqes gallantly on the board; once has eleven, mystic link with the magic seven, leapt triumphant from the box; and as he again prepares his skilful cast, the backers spread their accumulating counters where the word "in" points the way to fortune; whilst one pale youth, whose propensity for backing out each player but himself has in this instance cost him nearly the price of his commission, but who prides himself upon his immoveability of countenance and temperament, drawls out — "Rather a good caster!" "Page, give me another hundred;" and, with a fresh bowl and another relay of counters, works perseveringly on in his untoward course. But meanwhile the box rattles aloft. "Seven!" shouts the caster, and the green masks echo—"The main is seven." "Make your game, gentlemen." Still the white glove is vibrating aloft, and the lynx-eyes twinkle beneath the green shades of the attendants; one more rattle, and down

comes the box with a violence that leaves a semicircular mark indented on the cloth. No seven is there, but an envious five grins at him from the dice. "A five to a seven," says the shade, as the caster spreads his store between the parallel lines in front of him. One voice is heard to say—"What are the odds?" A tyro he, but quickly to be instructed by the brief reply of "Three to two;" and had he looked at his next neighbour he would have seen two red counters, signifying each one hundred pounds, laid quietly down to be converted into three by one successful cast: the wished-for five comes not, and still delayed is the dreaded seven. All the numerals seem to come up in turn but those on which hope and fear depend. How loud the clock ticks! it jars on the strung nerves of the players as they watch the dice with straining eyes. One turn of the wrist sends a die spinning across the table, which, stopped by the opposite edge, turns up a tray. Now for the tug of war. "If there is one thing I pride myself on, it is dribbling a deuce," says the unmoved caster, in reply to the groom-porter's business-like observation of "tray landed," and laughingly he shakes the still imprisoned die in its cell.

Holding the box horizontally, he waves it twice or thrice with a sweeping motion of his wrist, and gently impels the ivory messenger on its important errand. The dice pitches on its corner, rolls over, and lo! a fatal four stands confessed. "Seven out," says the green shade. Busily work the rakes to gather in the spoil. The pale youth having been scrupulously paid, gathers his winnings towards him, while the defeated caster, declining the courteous offer of "a back," rolls the box on to his nearest neighbour, veiling his chagrin under an affected smile.

I had been so occupied in watching this scene as I stood behind the principal performer, identifying myself with his interests and triumphing in his success, that I never remarked Jack Raffleton, who, having taken a chair on the further side of the table, was now immersed in the chances and changes of the game. Judging by the multiplicity of counters before him, he was winning considerably; but nothing in Jack's handsome face would ever give an observer an idea of what was going on within. Winning or losing, he was coolness itself, and amongst other peculiarities of his temperament, he was never

known by his most intimate friends to put himself in a passion. As he himself said, when, meeting him after a certain Derby, I condoled with him on the loss which I knew he had sustained of two thousand—"Yes," was Jack's answer, with his usual cheery laugh; "but, worse than that, I have lost my carriage and my luncheon; been losing my time looking for them; and now, if I can only lose my temper I shall have got rid of everything belonging to me, and start fresh, as an insolvent in a new line." Poor Jack! he was a great friend of mine, and I must be excused if I cannot resist the temptation of relating another anecdote, exemplifying the way in which he could keep his temper under the most ruffling circumstances.

Before he exchanged into the Guards, Jack was a subaltern in a *very crack* Hussar regiment, and, as may be supposed, was a dandy of the first water. Naturally of an affectionate and kind disposition, he was as fond of pets as any old maid that ever kept a parrot; and of all his favourites, two tiny King Charles's spaniels bore the bell. He never walked out without them; they had a seat in his phaeton, and a bed on his writing-table; and it was a

joke at mess that the only way to get a “rise” out of Jack was to abuse his long-eared darlings.

One fine summer’s day Jack was sauntering leisurely up the High-street, with his little four-footed friends, as usual, close behind him, when the odour of Midsummer meat from a butcher’s shop proved too much temptation for Fan to resist ; and, sneaking quietly away, she ensconced herself, in company with a large piece of raw flesh, right under the butcher’s dresser. Out of the back-shop rushed blue-sleeves in a fury, aggravated by the height of the temperature, and with one kick sent poor Fan flying across the street, to where her elaborately-dressed master was sauntering quietly along. He heard the piteous howl of his favourite, and saw the stalwart butcher fuming upon his doorstep ; and one glance explained the whole transaction. But what did Jack?—rush across the street, and annihilate the miscreant who could so ruthlessly treat a dumb animal ? No such thing. The highway had been watered, and was inch-deep in mud : Jack’s boots were French-polished, and fitted him like a glove : so he gingerly walked on to where a paved crossing enabled

him to pass over unsoiled ; and, marching down the street again at the same tranquil pace as before, halted immediately opposite the butcher, who was still nursing his wrath in his own doorway.

“ I say, butcher,” drawled out the dandy, “ did you kick my dog ? How could you do so ? You are very ugly, and enough to frighten any animal to death without mauling it.”

Such an address as this was not calculated to sooth irritation ; and the butcher, a proper-built fellow of some fourteen stone, intimated his intention of treating the questioner (whose appearance he thoroughly despised) in the same manner that he had served his dumb favourite.

“ Oh, you will, will you ? Butcher, can you fight ? ” said Jack, as he buttoned his coat systematically up to the throat ; and, drawing on his gloves, stood carelessly in front of his antagonist. “ Now, butcher, are you ready ? ” added the dandy, aggravating his address with a lisp put on for the occasion.

To it went the man of marrow-bones with a will ; and, being a stout active fellow, made sure that a few rounds would settle the whole

business. And so it did ; but not exactly as he anticipated. He had altogether mistaken his customer. Jack, a lathy lengthy man, far heavier than his antagonist had they both been brought into condition, was, besides this, one of the best amateurs in London ; and as he kept peppering away with perfect good humour at his adversary, it was evident that what was a mortal struggle to the butcher was merely a “breather” to the swell. After a few unsuccessful rallies, in which the Hussar did not receive a single scratch, a well-planted right-hander in the wind sent the yokel down upon the pavement ; where he lay, apparently deaf to the call of time. Ere this a crowd had collected ; and the remarks made were, as usual, highly complimentary to the winner.

“Yes,” said Jack, in reply to a scientific rat-catcher who was dilating on the issue of the fight—“Yes ; I wasted my time sadly upon his dial-plate. Had he been *a baker* instead of *a butcher*, I should have hit him in the *bread-basket* long ago.”

So much for Jack’s coolness ! And as he sat behind his pile of counters (and I saw that he had a sum far exceeding what I knew to be his yearly income, on the table in front of him,

depending on the issue of the next main) I could not help regretting that all that nerve, judgment, coolness, and daring should be lavished on such a pursuit as Hazard. Many a good man has rued the hours wasted and the means squandered upon a cubic piece of ivory. Often had I been warned of the fascination of play—often had I been told that the allurements of the demon were irresistible, and that once having given way, once having fallen, there was no retreat; yet, even as I looked, I felt the spell stealing over me, the insidious poison was creeping into my veins, and almost ere I was aware I had seated myself at the table between my friend and a fresh-coloured, good-humoured looking personage who was playing like fury, and prepared to take my first sip of that goblet whose brim sparkles with the keenest excitement—whose dregs, alas! too often drained, are remorse, infamy, it may be suicide.

The heart beat and the hand trembled as I took my bowl with its *modicum* of counters. “Young I was, and sore afraid;” and a modest *pony* was all I ventured to call for on this, my first essay. The table was pretty full; and I contented myself, until the box should come

round to me, with backing "in" or "out," as the whim seized me, in the smallest sums—enough, however, to decrease my store to nearly half its original amount; when my next neighbour, who having called for fresh dice, and selected two with the utmost care only to throw "crabs," with a stifled execration and a pleasing smile rolled the box on to me. Feeling somewhat shy and very nervous, I put £5 on the "in" and called "seven." Up came a ten: two or three more throws, and up came my ten again; apparently much to the satisfaction of Jack Raffleton and one other man, who had put on "cinques," which, as they said, I had "landed for them." I did not quite understand it; but receiving my winnings with a good grace, allowed them to remain on the table, and again prepared to call "seven." Why was it that the "ins" on each side of the table were immediately filled up? Why was the disposition to back the caster so unerringly displayed? Could my verdancy have already peeped out? Could my generosity to the "table" in having nothing to do with the odds on my previous throw have stamped me at once as a fresh hand, whose proverbial good luck would enable winners to add heap to heap, and losers to "ride home upon the young

one?" I know not; but I could not help remarking the tendency, and, truth to tell, it served to encourage me wonderfully. "Seven," I called lustily; and down it came "*a nick*." Still did I leave my winnings untouched; and again I called the magic number—"Eleven's a nick!" "Bravo!" "A capital caster!" and other laudatory mutterings are heard around. In short, ere I threw out with an unsuccessfully-attempted nine I had attained my *thirteenth* main, to the discomfiture of the bank and the satisfaction of several lords and gentlemen who had speculated on my success. Jack Raffleton won largely; my fresh-coloured friend enormously; and I myself got up a richer man by £350 in crisp bank-notes than I had sat down. Little did I think how spoonily I had managed my good fortune. I was quite satisfied with my success; and did not disturb myself with the reflection that had my friend Jack, or almost any other man at the table, been indulged with such a run of luck as mine, he would have "broke the bank" to a certainty, and walked off with some three or four thousand pounds as his own share of the spoil.

Up I got, and there was at the same time a general move from the table. Polished attendants offered me every sort of grateful compound to drink, but I felt neither hunger nor thirst; and as I walked home in the cool air of a summer's morning (beautiful *even* in Piccadilly !), and smoked my cigar, in the full flush of triumph, I could not help feeling that I had turned over a fresh page in the book, and, like the pleasure-palled despot of the east, I had discovered a new source of happiness. Stay ! happiness it could hardly be called : it was excitement—boiling, thrilling excitement. But as I looked on the dappled sky above me, and felt the balmy air of morning breathe upon my cheeks, a purer train of thoughts stole over me; and I felt that the life I was then leading could hardly be called a happy one. Gradually and insensibly long-past scenes came back. I thought of my merry childhood and my mother's care, never to be replaced in after-life; and even then a true friend at my side might have turned me from the career I was pursuing. But, no ! Jack's merry face, as he rattled by me in a Hansom cab, on his way home to dress for a field-day

(sleep, I believe, he never indulged in), broke up my reveries, and I laid my head on my pillow, half-pleased half-remorseful at my evening's amusement; and thus ended my first night at Crocky's.

CHAPTER VII.

ASCOT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

“ *Falstaff*.—Master Shallow, I owe you a thousand pounds.

“ *Shallow*.—Ay, marry, Sir John, which I beseech you to let me have home with me. * * * I beseech you, good Sir John, let me have five hundred of my thousand.”

KING HENRY THE FIFTH.

CAN anything be more enjoyable than glorious Ascot, in the beautiful weather which our much-calumniated climate vouchsafes only to the June meeting on that sunny heath? The three fine days and the thunder-storm, supposed to constitute an English summer, invariably include the “Cup day;” and, wonderful to say, I have known it so hot during the races as to make the deluge with which they concluded really welcome to the sun-dried

sportsman. To a calculating mind, not immersed in the intricate computation of "the odds," there must be something positively awful in the quantity of soda-water, claret-cup, "Badminton," and other anti-febrile liquids consumed between the Tuesday and Friday of that eventful week which so often determines this knotty point in the speculator's mind—whether, having retrieved the losses that "hit him so hard" at Epsom, he shall proceed, rejoicing in his hazardous career, to woo Fortune during an interminable series of meetings, including Liverpool, Goodwood, and all the gatherings at Newmarket, in the full triumph of success; or whether, adopting the consoling and generally-recognized principle that

" He who bets, and runs away,
If he loses, need n't pay,"

he shall take wing, to restore his health and recruit his finances, in the placid recreations of a German watering-place, where, as he cultivates a pair of dirt-coloured moustaches, he may reflect on the close-shaved appearance of his creditors at the Corner, doomed to pay, but *not receive*; an awkward arrangement with a man who considers "no bet can be called so

until hedged," and who, like honest Shallow, would be too happy to compound for "five hundred out of his thousand."

But little did I think of all these weighty considerations as I found myself, some five or six weeks after my *début* at Crockford's, which I have already mentioned, inhaling the fragrant atmosphere of a bright June morning on princely Ascot Heath. My costume adapted to the weather, my neck-cloth loose and my boots easy, with a good conscience, and a balance at my banker's, what more could be wanting to youth and health for the rapturous enjoyment of the exciting present? I am bound to confess I experienced an occasional twinge concerning the future, but only as regarded "my book," an appendage with a metallic pencil which I had lately set up, and whose cabalistic page assured me, on reference, that I had better not have backed "Deceiver" at two to one, and "Hidebound" at evens for the "Fernhill," seeing that the former was scratched, and the latter had most unaccountably retreated to the meanest of outside prices. However, I had plenty of other bets on the same event, and with that dubious consolation I made my mind easy.

The most comfortable way of "doing Ascot" is to take a villa somewhere in the neighbourhood, many of which are to be rented during the meeting, at reasonable prices *for a race week*. As Jack Raffleton says, "all enjoyment is cheap at a pound a minute;" and the way he works out his problem is ingenious enough:—"Fewer people have been ruined by fox-hunting than most other sporting pursuits; *ergo*, a man who hunts saves money. If you calculate the runs you see during a season, you will find a pound a minute rather below the mark in your expenses; *ergo*, a man who lives at that rate must be a most economical personage." On this principle my friend Bloomsbury (a friend of some three weeks' standing—I was introduced to him on a drag at Epsom), Mr. Sharpes (his working partner in a wine-concern, whose *locale* I could never distinctly make out), young Plantagenet Cripps (of the eminent firm of "Cripps, Martin, and Co.," whose share in the business appeared to be spending the profits), and myself, agreed to take a small, well-furnished, and picturesque cottage, with French windows, and "*con-vanient*," as they say in Ireland, to the Heath. Having stored this residence with an excellent

commissariat, and an unlimited supply of Bloomsbury's famous '34 (a decoction of hermitage and liquorice), we entered upon our four days' residence with great satisfaction; and, in order to have as little as possible for our money, had agreed to come down the first day, and go back to London on the last. Jack Raffleton was quartered at Windsor; and, having breakfasted with his battalion at the barracks, Plantagenet Cripps and myself had the advantage of getting to the Heath on the outside of a drag, inhabited by a very pleasant lot of Guardsmen, and coached by one of their number, whose predilection for what is termed "fancy driving" was the only drawback to his performance. This arrangement, I confess, originated in the fertile brain of young Cripps, whose adoration for "the military" was unbounded, and whose day-dream, never to be realized, was the achievement of a commission in the Grenadiers; which, for an individual not on *the list*, turned six-and-twenty, and standing an honest five-feet-two in his "brodequins," seemed a project as unlikely as it would have been inappropriate. Inside the drag, to keep their "collars" and "bosoms" free from dust, were a couple of Yankees, landed only the day

before at Portsmouth, and whose knowledge of English scenery and English climate, or, as they termed it, "British clearins" and a "British heving," was limited to the deep blue sky above us, and the stately vistas of Windsor's magnificent forest.

I was amused at the unblushing manner in which a young ensign, very lately castigated by Dr. Hawtry, was lionizing the Republicans, assuring them, in reply to their many questions concerning our summer and our country, that we called this the "cool" season; that it lasted eight months out of the twelve; and that, with the exception of our manufacturing towns and seacoast, the whole of Great Britain consisted of such giant oaks and verdant lawns as were now stretching away on either side of us. On arriving at the course, the younger American—a peculiarly sallow gentleman, with turn-down collars—was most anxious to know why so many carriages containing the fair sex should be ranged on *either side* of the course; his "Cicerone," with the mischievous spirit of a schoolboy, informing him that the aristocracy, gentry, and respectables were placed as near as possible to the Stand, while those facing that edifice were somewhat less particular in their

notions of etiquette, and were sufficiently liberal to allow of their acquaintance being made without much unnecessary form or ceremony. A mistake which might have produced such disagreeable consequences was very properly set right, and the wag severely rebuked by a gentlemanlike elderly man, one of the colonels in the regiment, who, however, could not conceal a smile at the conceit which he demolished. After several hair-breadth 'scapes, and a great deal of getting down on the part of the "militaire," who officiated as "*shoot*," we arrived on the Heath, with the loss of but one bottle of light claret, which, having been broken and absorbed in the contents of a pigeon-pie, was voted rather an improvement than otherwise. The first person I met on the course was Jack Raffleton, who had cantered over from the barracks early in the morning, on a most mysterious expedition, to meet a sagacious-looking trainer and a couple of dwarfs, connected in some way with what people call "a *private* trial."

I never had nerve to elbow my way boldly into the ring, and proclaim in a stentorian voice that I would "lay the long odds against Cræsus," or, like the great capitalist of the

present day, publish my willingness to “lay against anything,” which, to my inexperienced eye, presents the most appalling picture of recklessness; so linking my arm in that of my friend’s partner, Mr. Sharpes, I hang on the outskirts of the ring, and am stunned by the ceaseless vociferation, for which “business” of this description is so remarkable. “I’ll lay five ponies to two against Shylock”—“I’ll back the field for a pony”—“Anybody lay against Leviathan?”—“I’ll lay agin Wrath”—“Six hundred to one against Woodpecker”—“Can’t do it, sir”—“Take five”—“What about The Crab?”—“Do it again, Colonel?”—“What name shall I put down?”—“I’ll lay against Woodpecker”—“I’ll name two against the field”—“I’ll lay ten to one against The Crab”—“The field for a pony!”—&c., &c. Such is the Babel-like confusion ringing in my ears; but ere I have time to marvel at the wonderful hoarseness of “Wrath’s” persevering enemy, a general rush takes place to see the horses saddled, and we are carried away by the stream. On looking at my book, I am shocked to find The Crab now at “ten to one,” the horse on whom I stand to win; and I endeavour in vain to see him stripped and saddled,

that I may gather confidence from his appearance. Twice am I nearly kicked by the neatest of plates, which are lashed out with scarcely the warning of one whisk from the thoroughbred tail. Twice are my toes most painfully trodden on by the precipitate retreat of the backing crowd. Long ere I have accomplished my search, the bell rings, the course is cleared, and I am as ignorant as ever of all concerning The Crab, except that he is a chestnut, which is hardly a distinction, seeing that there are four other chestnut horses in the race. However, Sharpes and I take up a convenient position, and prepare for the thrilling sight. The horses canter past, some going remarkably short. I refer to my card, and am gratified to see The Crab looks racing-like all over, and besides, from the orange cap, is easily to be distinguished in the ruck. The noise in the ring is worse than ever, and now, as Sharpes tells me, is my time "to hedge;" back I rush to the congregated speculators, find I cannot wedge my way in, and determine to stand the shot.

They're off! The flag's down! "There they go!"—"Redcap leading!" "Woodpecker's coming up!" "My eyes! how Nat

is forcing the running !” “ Woodpecker wins !”
“ Woodpecker’s beat !” “ Lord Exeter wins !”
“ The mare wins !” “ Lord Exeter wins !”
The mare ! the mare !! What a capital race !
The thrill is over—delightful while it lasted,
though somewhat expensive. I cast a glance
at the number up, to make sure, and then with
a little simple arithmetic discover that I have
lost £75. Never mind ; it was a slashing race,
won by a head, not a length between the first
three. I should have done much worse if
Shylock had won ; and The Crab ran as honest
as the day, and was a good third ; so I draw a
long breath, like a man who has been bled, and
soothe my excited feelings with a tapering
cigar.

The next being an unimportant race, and
having no bets connected with it, Sharpes and
myself, accompanied by Bloomsbury, who had
won his money, took the opportunity of in-
specting “ the humours,” not the least amusing
part of a race-course, and hunting amongst the
carriages and in front of the Stand for our
friends and acquaintances. “ How are you,
Bloomsbury ?” “ Sharpes, my boy ! I’m glad
to see you.” “ Mr. Cotherstone, Mr. Nogo—
Mr. Nogo, Mr. Cotherstone ;” and with this

introduction, and the removal of our respective beavers, we are joined by a gentleman, whom at first sight I took to be a clergyman, but who, notwithstanding his clerical appearance, Bloomsbury afterwards informed me was "far from it." Of the middle stature, close-shaved, and got up with the most scrupulous neatness, his whole appearance, though without the slightest pretensions to good looks, was extremely prepossessing. He rejoiced in that prosperous look which white teeth and a fresh complexion invariably produce; and his costume, though not in the least slang—in fact, as I have already said, bordering on the ecclesiastical—had that indefinable something which is always associated in my mind with a good horseman; there was a neatness about his trowsers and boots that looked as if *he rode* in them, and altogether I should have guessed him to be the rector of some remote parish in the midland counties, whose duties were not sufficiently onerous to prevent his hunting three or four times a week, and sailing away amongst the "best of them."

I quite jumped at his hospitable offer of luncheon in his carriage after the next race, and was picturing to myself the sort of people

“Mrs. Cotherstone and my daughter” might be, as he informed us they were on the course, and we should meet them on proceeding to attack his lobster-salad and champagne, when a general rush and separation took place to view the next race, which was a hollow affair, and scarcely created any sensation. Not so the event that came off immediately afterwards, and which gives Ascot its pre-eminence over all other meetings whatever : I allude to the arrival of Royalty to participate in our favourite national sport. The brilliant *cortége* the well-built carriages and showy horses, the outriders in their scarlet liveries, the *then* master of the buckhounds, whose lengthy, graceful figure, and perfect seat on horseback, combining the *manége* riding of the dragoon with the strength and freedom of the fox-hunter (we beg his pardon—stag-hunter, though we believe the former with him was the earlier creation), obtained its due share of applause. The whole “turn out” so English and gentlemanlike, as well as princely in its appearance ; and then the welcome presence of our fair and gracious Sovereign herself, the most popular Monarch that ever ruled our British realms, with her stalwart consort, and beautiful children—all

this together made the heart beat and the eye glisten, as the ear was deafened by the united voices of shouting multitudes. Cheer upon cheer, like the waves of the sea, came rolling onwards, gaining strength and volume as they thundered up the course, till opposite the Grand Stand the enthusiasm was at its height, and Windsor Castle's stately pile itself, towering afar in the silent summer-sky, must have trembled to the echo.

But we proceed to search for the carriage that is to furnish us with sustenance, and on the way thither Sharpes volunteered a little information with regard to our new acquaintance.

There are some people that everybody but oneself seems to know, and of this class was Mr. Cotherstone. He had been at Cambridge, it appears, and studied for "the bar," but was supposed to have been "rusticated," in consequence of an affair at whist, out of which none of the party came very creditably; after this he seems to have lived upon his wits, and married on the same provision for his future family, and this patrimony had now lasted him for several years. He had a nice house not very far from Ascot, capital wine, two or three first-rate

horses, on which he could "go a good one," and everything else, as Sharpes expressed it, "most comfortable," was very popular at all the messes of all the regiments within dining distance, and in short was a "deuced gentlemanlike fellow." All this I extracted as it were on the rack from my informant, Mr. Sharpes being a man of few words, and one who never threw an expression or a chance away.

Declining all offers from dark-eyed gipsy women, and resisting the entreaties for a remembrance of a pecuniary nature from the host of "Paddies" who knew all about us in the hunting-field, and hoped to see "our honors" at Hampton, we charged boldly through "*the sticks*" (at which athletic amusement a noble lord was fast breaking the "bank"); and finding our entertainer's carriage with some difficulty, performed the usual "salaam," and my introduction coming off successfully, were installed without further ceremony, and made free of the sundry good things we had been promised. I found Plantagenet Cripps comfortably settled by the side of Miss Cotherstone; the latter being so taken up with what Plantagenet was pleased to term his *small-talk*, and

which certainly was of the smallest description, that she hardly vouchsafed an answer to my introductory bow, and turned herself so completely away that I was forced to be content with the contemplation of her bonnet, through whose transparency I could perceive she rejoiced in long and glossy locks of the raven's hue. But little time had I for anything but Mrs. Cotherstone ; a middle-aged lady, with an eye like a hawk, and a "front" coming low down upon her forehead. I am always a little nervous with old ladies, and had no slight difficulty in parrying the host of questions with which I was plied on this occasion. "Been fortunate in your speculations, Mr. Nogo? Come down from London this morning? Choked with dust; beautiful drive through Windsor Forest; and what do you think of Virginia Water? Queen looking uncommonly well, and the dear children. Bore going back to town after the races—makes one so late at dinner."

I here contrived to edge in a word, and had got as far as "Bloomsbury and I have taken a villa," when she broke in again with—"Charming person Mr. Bloomsbury; so gentlemanlike!" (I thought "well!")—"so agreeable! an old

friend of ours ; had a capital day as yet, won £700. Mr. Cotherstone always so unlucky : only bets in half-crowns, but never wins. Hope we shall become better acquainted, Mr. Nogo ; trust you will come and dine with us before you leave Ascot. Have some more lobster-salad?—thank you—champagne—.” And with this running fire we passed the time till the father of the family made his appearance, linked arm-in-arm with Bloomsbury, and looking, with all his calmness, uncommonly like a man who, however much he might have been *losing* in half-crowns during the morning, had evidently been *winning* in hundreds.

This arrival made a slight diversion in my favour ; Bloomsbury immediately taking the elder lady off my hands, and entering upon a brisk and chatty flirtation with his old friend. I remarked Bloomsbury’s wig was exactly the colour of Mrs. Cotherstone’s. I suspect they both patronized one of those advertising emporiums which profess to supply “ mustachios, whiskers, eyebrows, and,” above all, “ that grand desideratum, a fine head of hair ! ” The patriarch of the family, who looked twenty years younger than his fatter half, had some mysterious information to convey to Cripps,

for which purpose he took that diminutive dandy aside for a long conversation, in which the words "broke down," "coughing," and "not worth a row of gingerbread," were more than once overheard. All these arrangements left me a clear field with the young lady ; and champagne, under a midsummer sun, having pretty well overcome my natural timidity of disposition, I assumed the vacant seat by her side, and proceeded to go a-head. As the bright eyes which I now saw for the first time had a good deal of influence on my movements during the ensuing season, I may be allowed to indulge in a faint sketch of their seductive owner.

Kate Cotherstone was a young lady peculiarly adapted by nature to the part which I learnt, in time, she had been sedulously instructed to perform. With a short and neat figure, that looked enchanting on horseback, she combined a most piquante and joyous expression of countenance, set off by beautiful teeth, in a rather large mouth, jet black hair always "done" to perfection, and a fresh healthy colour without being "*blowsy*." Her eyes, of a very light grey, and with a cunning and malicious expression, were her worst

feature ; but then such long black eyelashes and arching eyebrows would have made amends for a squint itself. She rejoiced in such a foot and ankle as our native soil does not often produce ; and, need I add, that she could dance *too well* for a lady. Young Sabretasche, of the —th Hussars, swears he once waltzed with her for five-and-thirty minutes ; and, as that polished young warrior expresses it, she was not “ half-beat at the finish.” Her other accomplishments I may sum up in a few words. I have seldom met any one who could ride so well, play and sing better, or draw half such good caricatures ; she always held a capital hand at whist, which she played most judiciously ; and I have known her, in the free and nautical regions of Cowes, to inhale the pleasing narcotic of a mild cigar !

My recollections of that heavenly day at Ascot are one whirl of blue sky, racing, shouting, champagne, and Kate Cotherstone. I was fairly *hooked* before I had sat with her for half an hour. We voted the open carriage the only place to see the races from ; we pored together over my book, whose figures my fair adviser appeared perfectly to comprehend ; we

rushed headlong into a half-sovereign lottery, which Mrs. C. won, as she said, "quite providentially;" we arranged a ride to Virginia Water on the worst day's racing, and a pic-nic in the forest for the following week. Once I descended from my perch, and proceeded boldly into the ring to back "Here-I-go-with-my-tail-on," because *she* thought it such a *darling* name; on which occasion I lost "a pony" to Papa, which it afterwards occurred to me I might have done as easily from the carriage. Then I wagered a pair of gloves with my enslaver; and, losing of course, had to request the *loan* of one of the pretty little white kids, that clung so lovingly to that tapering hand, that "I might make no mistake about the size." Under the most sacred promises of a speedy restitution, this was at last granted; and I was in the act of placing the late-won treasure next my heart, *inside* my waistcoat, when the effect of my chivalrous and devoted action was much spoilt by the consciousness that I was watched by Bloomsbury and Co., Plantagenet Cripps (confound him), and Jack Raffleton, who was to dine with us—the whole four excusing this disgraceful *espionage* by the pretence that they

were waiting to accompany me home to our villa, the races being over. Heavens, so they were! I blushed up to the rim of my white hat, crammed *the glove* into my coat pocket, bid Miss Cotherstone a most confused "Good morning," stammered out an unintelligible acceptance of Mamma's hospitable invitation to "dine with them to-morrow not later than a quarter before eight;" and joining my quizzing associates, was much discomfited by Jack's very disagreeable remark, that "Nogo's hit very hard; got it just under the wing, and likely to prove a bad case!"

CHAPTER VIII.

ASCOT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

“ *Benedick*.—Suffer love. A good epithet !
I do suffer love indeed, for I love thee against
my will.”

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

OUR dinner-party at the villa, as we called it *par excellence*, consisted of Bloomsbury, Sharpes, Cripps, and myself, with the addition of Jack Raffleton, whose good humour and good spirits enlivened us considerably. Many a sly hit and inuendo were pointed at my devoted head, and the most sacred feelings of my bosom (all arisen since morning) appeared to these wordly spirits only to furnish an endless subject for bad puns and impertinent remarks.

“ Nogo ! let’s go to the Windsor ball to-morrow night ; there’s always a good ball

during Ascot week. All the First will be there, and we shall have some fun," said Bloomsbury, heating an already much inflamed countenance with a third bumper of his own most execrable champagne. Why is it that a wine-merchant should always think it necessary to consume his wares in such profusion? The sorcerer imbibes not the philtre of his own compounding, and the apothecary most religiously eschews the mixture he has himself made up. "Besides," added Bloomsbury, smacking his great lips with a relish that could hardly be feigned, "we shall have all the people who live about here, and Mrs. Cotherstone made me promise to bring some dancing men."

"Nogo! a glass of wine!" "Nogo! your good health!" "Nogo! *you'll go!*"—the latter from Jack Raffleton—burst upon my tingling ears. I blushed. How could I help it? I swore I hated balls, and never danced—did not think I should go. Heaven forgive me! I had promised *her* that very afternoon that nothing earthly should prevent my being at the ball and claiming her hand for the very first waltz. In short I was over head and ears in love; and the whole of that glorious June

evening, despite of a most elaborate dinner, despite of the rallying of my companions, despite of the many bumpers of claret, so grateful to the throat parched and fevered with the excitement of a day's racing in that tropical weather—despite of all, I sat as one entranced. I saw, heard, felt nothing but Kate Cotherstone. I ate strawberries; but their fragrance only reminded me of winding paths through gardens of roses, and I thought of the bliss of an evening stroll with Kate Cotherstone. The ruby wine sparkled in my thin crystal goblet, and bore my spirit on its blushing wave to the clustering vineyards of sunny France, the joyous region of Bordeaux (an imaginary district, which, if truth must be told, the innocent liquor before me had never visited), and I thought what a paradise it would be with Kate Cotherstone!

Heedless of the chat and merriment of my companions, I looked through the French windows, thrown open down to the ground to catch the faintest sigh of the summer's evening breeze; I gazed on the sloping lawn, the darkening woods, the last faint blush of sunset fading into that indescribable clear transparent hue, which of all the gems of earth the opal

alone can strive to imitate; and I thought of Kate Cotherstone. How I treasured up every syllable we had interchanged during the day! how I twisted and tortured every word she had uttered, to discover some hidden meaning of approbation or encouragement! How I thought of what she *might* have said, and what I *ought* to have said!—how I speculated on the possibility of her affections being disengaged; and made the boldest resolution of declaring my attachment, and distancing all competitors! In short, the ideas and improbabilities that succeeded each other through my brain can only be conceived by those whose youthful fancies have been, like mine, the sport of a wayward and uncontrolled imagination. I was a fool; I think I knew it, and yet I was a happy one. The evening wore on; the last, positively the last of a series, every one of which had in turn been called “just another bottle,” had been drained. Midnight approached, and coffee and candles made their joint appearance, when a suggestion from Sharpes, I believe the first he made that evening, with regard to broiled bones, produced a simultaneous demand for the backgammon board, not for the purpose of indulging in that

innocent recreation of the elderly, but in order to bring into play quite a different sort of "bones" from those for which Sharpes had asked.

"A little chicken?" said Jack Raffleton, parodying the lines of Lady Mary Wortley Montague—

"And when the dull hours of the public are past,
We meet with champagne and *some chicken* at last."

"Chicken, by all means," shouted Cripps.

"What do you say to 'Vingt-John'?" hiccuped Bloomsbury, overcome, like some Bacchanalian wizard, by the spirit he had himself conjured up.

"Not enough for a round game," was the unanimous reply; and chicken-hazard was voted the only pastime for the small hours of morning. We sat down to play accordingly; and a glorious summer sun had already risen for two hours when I sought my couch, jaded and headachy under the combined influence of noise, excitement, and cigar-smoke. The never-ceasing rattle and bang of the dice-box, as it circulated with varying fortune from hand to hand in our small party, might have deafened less sensitive ears than mine: and the

paltry gain of "a pony" was hardly an equivalent for a feverish night and seedy morning.

Let me pass over the following day's racing and the usual repetition of betting, luncheon, gain and loss—like all repetitions, somewhat flat, stale, and most decidedly unprofitable. The gloss of novelty soon wears off; and excitement must be kept continually increasing, or it ceases to deserve the name. The horses ran or were pulled, the odds were laid or were taken, the people shouted, and the sun shone, but it was all a blank to me. What was Ascot and its glories—what was champagne and lobster-salad? There was no Kate Cotherstone, and I loathed the smiling summer's day. There was her father, however, the Rev. Mr. Cotherstone, as I could hardly help calling him—he looked so like a clergyman. There he was, clean, fresh, and healthy as usual, making innumerable entries in a large betting-book, with unvarying urbanity. Some intuitive knowledge of racing he must certainly have possessed. When he laid against Don Cæsar de Bazan, down went that herring-shaped animal to zero; when he took the odds about the "Odalisque colt," up came the nameless flyer to "par." And he assured me with an

unblushing countenance that he was “merely booking a few trifling bets for a friend”—making a small fortune for the best friend he ever had, would have been nearer the mark. I stammered out an inquiry after his daughter, and my heart leaped when he told me she was “only keeping fresh for the ball.” Ah! that ball! How I looked forward to it; and how glad I was when a general move from the course enabled me to get home to dress for a dinner at the Cavalry Barracks, previous to the anticipated gaieties of the evening!

Any man not in love must have enjoyed the merriment, fun, and good-humour, which reigned paramount at the mess of our military entertainers. The party was certainly numerous; but all the material belonging to a mess is calculated for any number of visitors, and confusion is banished from the arrangements of the dinner-table as sedulously as from the evolutions of the field. No other description of entertainment is so generally agreeable as a mess dinner; there is all the variety of a large party without its formality—all the ease of a family circle without its occasional dullness. Of course our conversation turned much upon racing, as was natural in a party gathered

together for the enjoyment of that sport ; but literature, painting, and music, with an occasional dash of the old staple subject of fox-hunting, or perhaps I should rather say riding across a country, had each their turn ; and had I not been so anxious to get in good time to the ball, I should have been loath to leave such excellent claret, and so many agreeable companions. Resisting many kind invitations to stay and smoke “ a capital cigar,” I got nervously into the fly which I had ordered to be in readiness for me, and proceeded to the ball-room in a state of comparative lunacy.

To the observing mind a country ball presents many more objects for study and examination than does the regular stereotyped pattern which makes a London party ; there are more peculiarities to be admired, more individuality in the characters, and certainly, towards the close of the evening, more enjoyment and freedom, to make up for the greater stiffness and formality with which these rural gaieties invariably commence. The musicians, too, unless the mighty Jullien, or some equally notorious magnate, comes down in person, accompanied by his harmonious battalion, are of quite a different species from their brother-

followers of Orpheus in the metropolis ; they go to sleep more readily, appear to enjoy more tranquil slumbers, and when in that state play with a correctness that is quite surprising. I have remarked that the harp is an instrument which yields its sweetest tones to the touch of a performer more than half asleep ; and the minstrel who evokes its ringing sounds, with closed eyes and drooping head, only wakes when startled by the sudden cessation of his noisy companions during the pause that gives the fair waltzer breath to begin a fresh round of hard labour to the stunning accompaniment of the Row Polka.

I was one of the first arrivals, and had ample time, whilst drawing on my kid gloves, to observe the desolate appearance of an unfilled ball-room, with the musicians huddled up in their corner, and the only fellow-sufferers of my undue punctuality crowding round the empty fire-place, which doubtless they would have done had there been a blaze to roast an ox, though the thermometer the whole of that day must have marked 80 in the shade.

Never greyhound, straining in the slips, watched more eagerly than did I for the engrossing pursuit I had in view. As with

longing eyes I gazed upon the doorway, I had an opportunity of remarking the oddities of the several strange-looking individuals who made an early appearance on the scene—men in quaintly-constructed garments, bearing the freshest gloss of novelty, with coats too tight and gloves a world too wide, waistcoats of gorgeous rainbow-hues, and “continuations” which “Herr Cahan,” of Anaxyridian fame, would have swooned to contemplate. Truth to tell, their fair companions had not so disfigured themselves, although I distinctly perceived an unsightly opening in the ball-dress of one damsel, at that critical place where the graceful folds of a descending skirt spring from the tightest portion of a lady’s figure. Later in the evening, as we watched the gentle *figurante*, still “all agape,” through the mazy evolutions of a quadrille, Shabrac of the Life Guards whispered to me that he thought her “tail was devilish badly set on.” However, many of the rustic beauties, despite the want of a London dressmaker, and the inconvenience of one maid amongst five sisters, were really very lovely; and I could not help thinking that, if the *coiffures* were less glossy, and the gloves and satin shoes less shapely, than those

I had been accustomed to admire in corresponding scenes in the metropolis, still the blooming roses and sparkling eyes of these rural *débutantes* were a pleasing exchange for the pale, wan hues and listless languor of a London girl.

But the room gets more and more crowded, and the polka generates its accustomed fray. Pre-occupied as I am, I cannot help being amused as I watch the motley round. Couples of all sorts and sizes ; dancers of every style, from young Graceless of the Guards, and Miss Wideawake, swimming smoothly round in masterly *abandon* (she is ten years older than her partner, and Jack Raffleton says he'll bet five to two she hooks him), from that high-bred, easy-looking couple, to their next neighbours— a very badly-dressed gentleman, in a profuse perspiration, with a countenance like the “dancing faun,” who, furious with haste, and regardless of time and tune, is hustling that fat, fair, dowdy damsel along at a pace it needs no prophet to tell must be too good to last. See, they bump against yon elderly young lady in yellow, who, with projecting shoulder-blades, and all her remaining hair piled in wondrous superstructure on the top of her

venerable head, is cautiously steering through the intricacies of the dance her unfledged partner, a small, slight youth, just promoted to his first tail-coat. In vain—all motherly though the care she takes of him be, she shall not save him from his fate. He is knocked ruthlessly out of her hands by the “dancing faun;” and the aggressor, tripping over one of his own enormous feet,” *ricochets* back amongst the crowd of dancers, and, with a bump that makes the sitting *chaperones* nod again, comes headlong to the floor, dragging with him, in his precipitate discomfiture, his poor, pale, panting partner. Miss Wideawake looks up at young Graceless with *such* a smile. Poor boy! hereafter shall those haunting eyes look through you in many a morning dream in your lonely barrack-room. The music stops for an instant, but soon resumes the exhilarating air; and as I turn my head from the prostrate couple, I see that Mr. and Miss Cotherstone have just made their appearance in the doorway. Need I dwell on our greeting? Need I dwell on our first dance? I never was much of a waltzer, at the best of times; but Kate’s *deux-temps* was the most perfect thing that ever twinkled round a floor, and she “put

me along," as Jack Raffleton afterwards described it, "in the best form going." How the minutes flew! how soon the *Valse d'Amour*—that dreamy, heavenly melody—came to its close! "Did not Miss Cotherstone find it very hot? Would she not like some tea?" "Thank you; if you please," with a glance that went through me; and I could almost fancy a slight, nearly imperceptible pressure of the arm I was so pleased to offer. All flirtations, I suppose, are the same—like "cockamaroo," or any other game adapted only for two people, however engrossing they may be to the players, they are somewhat dull to the lookers-on, and will not bear repetition at all. The whole of that night I was like a man in a dream. Once she made me very angry by leaving me planted with mamma, whilst she not only waltzed, but likewise retired to a sort of "cooling room," with Le Beau of the "Tenth," a good-looking, flashy sort of fellow, that I did not at all fancy. But how could I bear any malice, when, on her return to the maternal wing, about which I was still hovering, she gave me a rosebud out of her bouquet, and asked me if I understood "the language of flowers?" Not I; but I thought I knew

what that meant in any language. Dear, dear! notwithstanding all that is gone and past, I have got that withered rosebud still.

I must confess that I deserved some remuneration for being left alone with Mrs. C. Her morning volubility, at all times most formidable, was now increased to a perfect torrent of small-talk, and accompanied by a slight hesitation and thickness of speech, which the uncharitable might attribute to "her medical man recommending port wine." Besides, her appearance in a ball-room was, to say the least of it, somewhat marked; as a stout, florid lady, in a red velvet dress and gorgeous jewellery, adorned with a very rubicund face, and further decorated by an exceedingly low front, and equally high turban, can scarcely hope in these days to escape observation—and such was the *tout ensemble* of Mrs. Cotherstone.

Many and reiterated were the injunctions that I should not forget to dine with them on the morrow. "Mr. Cotherstone will be *so* happy to see you," said the hospitable lady; and I am sure you will like our little house so much. No pretension, Mr. Nogo. As I say to Mr. C., says I, don't let's have pretension, but everything conformable—I mean, comfort-

able. Mr. C. would have been here to-night, but he never goes to balls—don't like sitting up so late. He's a quiet, domestic man, my husband, Mr. Nogo" (I happen to know he was at that moment playing *roulette* next-door) —“ ‘early to bed and early to rise;’ and what a blessing *that* is! As I say to Kate—Kate, says I, if ever you marry (you'll excuse a mother's feelings, Mr. Nogo), marry a domestic man, Kate; for what says the poet? I forget at this moment what he does say; but I dare say you remember, Mr. Nogo, and so—Thank you; a little port-wine negus, if you please.” And all this I endured for the sake of Kate Cotherstone, and thought myself richly rewarded when cloaking and shawling-time arrived, and, as I enveloped her lovely form in the softest cashmere, and gave her my arm to conduct her to the carriage, she whispered her “Good night!” in those thrilling accents which none knew better how to modulate. “We shall be *sure* to meet to-morrow—Oh, yes, I have got the gloves, and will never, *never* part with them.”

A happier man than I never smoked a cigar, as, driving back through the perfume-laden air of a June midnight, I listened to the nightingale warbling in the deep, dark glades

of Windsor's stately forest, and looked upward at the benignant moon shedding her silver radiance over all the summer night.

The following evening found me stepping out of my fly at Mr. Cotherstone's door, at a quarter to eight punctually. Another day's racing was concluded; and in my new character of a domestic man, which I had now resolved to adopt, I had carefully eschewed the betting-ring and all its vicissitudes. Besides a ten-pound note on "The Cup," I had not risked a shilling all day; and I rather congratulated myself on this decided improvement in my moral character. "What will not woman's sweet influence bring out?" I thought, as I drove up to Mr. Cotherstone's door, through a sort of half-shrubbery and half-garden, studded with evergreens and fragrant with roses. Nothing could be prettier than the house and grounds—the former a long, low building, standing so white and level on its smoothly-shaven lawn, with French windows opening in every direction on the well-kept flower-garden, now in all its midsummer beauty, from whence winding gravel-walks, with heavy borders of box, allured you into the picturesque and luxuriant

shrubberies, whose dwarfish proportions formed a pleasing contrast, shut in as they were by the noble oaks of Windsor Forest, which completed the picture. There was no smell of dinner in the hall as I entered; and a respectably rotund servant out of livery divested me of my paletot, whilst a foreign-looking individual—probably the valet—hovered about to assist him. On the right of a tasteful staircase, with carved oak balustrades, a door was thrown widely open; and “Mr. Nogo!” shouted in a stentorian voice by my fat friend, ushered me into the drawing-rooms and the presence of my enslaver. I was the latest arrival; and, as everything was done in *that* house in the most agreeable manner, I had hardly time to shake hands with Mr. and Mrs. Cotherstone, and exchange glances with their daughter, when dinner was announced, and the party pairing rapidly off, foiled me in a plan I had meditated for securing the society of my ladye-love, so that I found myself bringing up the rear, in the post of honour, with my flourishing hostess, who seemed to take exclusive possession of me, and treat me at once like a son.

It was not until seated at a well-appointed

round table, in a brilliantly-lighted and extremely pretty dining-room, that I had time to look about me and reconnoitre the party I had been asked to meet. We were eight in all; and, with the exception of myself, the guests appeared to be intimately acquainted with each other. On my left was a dashing-looking lady, certainly not very young, but showing the remains of great beauty, with a pair of piercing black eyes, whose brilliancy was enhanced by a judicious touch of rouge towards the cheek-bone, and to whom I was introduced as Mrs. O'Cleverley; her husband—a dark, forbidding-looking man, who was called “Major,” being nearly opposite. Kate was nearer Papa; and my view of her was somewhat obscured by the curly brown head, and stupendous whiskers, mustachios, &c., of a Count Favoris, an extremely good-looking foreigner, who paid her, I thought, much unnecessary attention, and who doubtless would have been still more agreeable, as well as intelligible, had he spoken the English language less entirely from ear. Next to him came my friend Sharpes, who had been obliged to be in London all that day, and had stopped to dinner with Mr. Cotherstone on his way back

to our joint abode. A place had been laid for Mr. MacBullion, of Discount-villas, Regent's-park, and the Stock Exchange, whose name it struck me I had heard somewhere; but he never made his appearance. Dinner progressed prosperously. Mrs. O'Cleverley and I became great friends; and her husband drank "woine" with me, in a strong Irish accent, with the greatest condescension. This ceremony—finding, I presume, the liquor to his taste—he repeated more than once. The champagne being excellent (certainly not from the firm of Bloomsbury, Sharpes, and Co.), we all soon became on the most sociable terms; and the deference with which I was treated by my agreeable entertainer and his guests, and to which, in the company of Jack Raffleton and my own friends, I was totally unaccustomed, was as pleasing as it was unexpected. Cotherstone was a most agreeable man, with a fund of small-talk and anecdote which was invaluable at a dinner-party. Then the whole thing was so exceedingly well done, and the discipline of the servants was so perfect, that not the slightest mistake or *contre-temps* of any kind could occur to spoil the effect of the performance. I believe Mrs.

Cotherstone deserved the credit of drilling the domestics, and was fond of the occupation. In after-days, when a great deal that had before been inexplicable was made clear to me, Jack Raffleton told me an anecdote that strongly exemplified the quaint good-humour of my former host. He and Jack were sitting after breakfast in the library, immersed in the computation of a money transaction in which they were jointly engaged, when the footman, in putting coals on the fire, by some unlucky movement brought down fender and fire-irons with an alarum that might have wakened the dead. Jack is not a nervous fellow ; but he assured me that the crash was such, he could not repress the oath that rose to his lips. Not so the master of the house. Looking up from the paper on which he was engaged, with the utmost coolness, and keeping his finger on it to mark his place, he thus addressed the astonished domestic : “ It is lucky for you, my friend, that your *mistress* was not in the room, or she would have fetched you such a kick in the rear of your person as you would have remembered to the last day of your life ; ” and without further remark resumed the abstruse calculations which had

been so rudely interrupted. But dinner was at length over. The ladies departed to the drawing-room; the claret was done ample justice to; coffee was announced in the "other room;" and, as we entered the tasteful drawing-room, our ears were greeted by the harmonious notes of the piano-forte, and our eyes indulged with all the usual arrangements of a properly set-out *écarté*-table.

CHAPTER IX.

Ophelia.—What means this, my lord ?

Hamlet.—Marry, this is miching mallecho ; it means mischief.

Ophelia.—Belike, this show imports the argument of *the play*.

HAD I been possessed of the shrewdness of him who had so much method in his madness, the haunted Dane, or even of poor Ophelia, Hamlet's ill-starred love, I might have suspected that all the show before me in Cotherstone's *bijou* of a drawing-room imported the argument of very high play indeed, and that sort of play in which the blind goddess was likely to dispense no equal favours ; but youth is naturally unsuspicious : forbid it, heaven, that it should be otherwise ! My objection to the rising generation is, that they *know too much* ; and an Etonian of the present day, in all matters of "nobbling," is able and willing

to get the best of his grandfather. Accordingly, I sipped my coffee, and made eyes at Kate Cotherstone, without the slightest feeling of insecurity, and thought myself superlatively happy when I had manœuvred my person into a vacant chair by her side, to watch her taper fingers plying a mysterious vocation, which ladies denominate "crochet," and the bands of her glossy raven hair throwing off the light with all the sparkle and polish of Count Favoris' jetty boots. I am at a loss for any other simile that would equally convey the idea of intense blackness. We were undisturbed in our delightful *tête-à-tête*; for mamma, reclining in an exceedingly recumbent attitude, on the easiest of all easy chairs, looking like an impersonation of midsummer, and fanning furiously with an instrument formed from some tropical bird's wing, was plying the silent Sharpes with ceaseless questions as to a late bit of London scandal, whilst Mrs. O'Cleverly, looking over a piece of new music, with an amused expression of malice in her large black eyes, was watching the impenetrable countenance of the laconic Sharpes, and listening to the quaint answers with which he put off his talkative hostess. Cotherstone was helping

Count Favoris to understand the Major's account of an animal he possessed. "A well-lept horse, bedad," and with which it was impossible to make out what the excited owner wished to do, as he declared at one moment that nothing should "injuice" him to sell so "accomplished a hunter," and at the next, that the Count should have him for "a hondred pounds, aqual to fourteen stone;" all which confused particulars his well-bred landlord was translating out of pure Milesian into the colder languages of England and France.

But Count Favoris finishes his coffee, and asks "Madame Clevare," as he dubs her, for "some song," and she sings what they all call "that beautiful Spanish thing" on the guitar. I do not understand the words, which appear to me to be a repetition of "cachecho, cachecho, cachecho," with a strong thump on the un-offending instrument, and a sound like a hiccup at the end of each stanza; but I applaud as vigorously as the rest, and venture a whisper to Kate that Mrs. O'Cleverly makes dreadful faces when she sings, upon which she calls me "a satirical creature," and vows she is "getting quite afraid of me," on which I think of saying something tender; but, having nothing ready-

coined, I am compelled to hold my tongue. Then Mrs. Cotherstone, who being stout is consequently sentimental, asks for "When we two parted, in silence and tears." Which melancholy ditty is really well sung by our guitar-playing *prima donna*, and we are all more or less affected by it, Kate looking down at the point of her little satin shoe with an air of becoming dejection that makes her prettier than ever. Then we talk about new music and the opera, and Count Favoris comes out wonderfully, for he is hand-and-glove with the professionals, and dines early with Lablache, and tells us how "the thunderer" rests his score against a claret bottle (an empty one, you may be sure), and hums through the whole of his part, in those magnificent tones, during his repast, nor leaves out whole scenes, nor substitutes a waggish remark in French, for Donizetti's elaborate conceptions, as is sometimes the case on the stage, when the "maestro" is lazy. And the Count, who is a perfect musician, and endowed with a deep rich voice and exquisite taste, needs little pressing to sing us some beautiful old *romans* of Berenger's school, and concludes with a Bacchanalian air of more modern date, graced with a constant repetition of

the monosyllable "hein," but sang with infinite zest and spirit ; and Kate, who has got a little cold, and is hoarse, is at length prevailed upon "to favour us."

In vain had mamma requested "dear Kate" to give us that pretty thing in the "Reine de Cypre," or her favourite air from the "Fille du Regiment." The young lady persisted in her cold and her refusal, till I said, "I had wished so to hear her sing." "Well, if *you* wish it, Mr. Nogo, I'll try ;" and she forthwith marched to the pianoforte, and warbled forth the "Blind Man's Bride," till I thought I should have cried. She really sang well, and with a degree of expression such as I have seldom heard. I sat with my eyes riveted on her countenance ; and when she came to the "refrain," "True love can ne'er forget ; dearest, I love thee yet," and looked at me with those piercing eyes that seemed to gaze into my very soul, what wonder that I quite made up my own mind as to who should be the future Mrs. Nogo ? But sentiment must have an end, and perhaps is put to flight by nothing more effectually than that most practical of all games, whist.

Cotharstone rings the bell ; green tables are put out ; lamps, with green shades, are placed

upon them. Cards, counters, &c., are displayed in workmanlike profusion, and we commence the ceremony of "cutting-in," the Major and Count Favoris at one table, against Mrs. O'Cleverly and our host. They play what they call "the regular stakes—pounds and fives," and enter upon their game in that business-like manner with which the real whist-player pursues his profession. The other quartette, consisting of Sharpes, the two remaining ladies, and myself, form a lighter game, in which the stakes are lower and the conversation allowed to proceed, and I have the delight of Kate Cotherstone for a partner. We played an agreeable rubber, to which nobody seemed to pay much attention; but it struck me at the time, although I am but an indifferent performer, that my partner never *made a mistake*. Whatever the card that Hoyle would have recommended, that was the card that leapt from her graceful hand. And when, in the changes of the game, she and her mother sat opposite each other, and entered upon the tug of war against Sharpes and myself, they cleaned us out most handsomely, considering the light stakes for which we were contending, and as that silent individual briefly remarked, as he rose

from the table, "Good cards—well played; I lose eight pounds seven and sixpence."

But the other table is broken up, and enter tray with sandwiches and sherry, and a servant to announce Major O'Cleverly's carriage; but Mrs. O'Cleverly must go home alone, as the Major means to stay and "smoke a cigar with Jack-me-boy," meaning Mr. Cotherstone; and the lady is put into the carriage, and carefully packed up by the host and Count Favoris, who looks as if he would like very much to attend her during her drive. And we give hand-candlesticks to the others, send them to bed, and adjourn to Mr. Cotherstone's sanctuary, where hot water, all kinds of liquids, cigars, and actually *another card table* awaits us. Soon is the steaming comfort compounded, and the fragrant smoke-wreath rises from the well-stored produce of the Havanna, and we interchange our ideas upon men and things, under these combined influences, as if we had all known one another for years.

After a cigar or two, the conversation turns upon whist; good and bad players—the chances and changes of the game—Major A., Hoyle, &c. Favoris hovers, like an unquiet spirit, round the table; and the Major, in exemplifying

some knotty point connected with the concluded rubber, discovers that the cards he is dealing are arranged for *écarté*.

“ A foine game, sir ! Me brother Cornaylius is the best player now in England.”

The upshot of all this is, that I, Tilbury Nogo, understanding the science of the game in the sort of way that nine out of every ten unsophisticated English gentlemen do *misunderstand* it, and, moreover, dazzled and excited by the combined influence of claret, music, wax-lights, and bright eyes—to say nothing of cigars, and wonderful whisky-punch, compounded by mine host—sit recklessly down, to pit my unfledged strength, a willing pigeon, against Count Auguste Anatole Jean Louise Favoris, of Burlington-street, London, and the Bois de Boulogne (for aught I know), Paris. I win the first three games off, and scouting the moderate stakes at which we commenced, I boldly accede to the Count's proposal of a pony on the game, and fifty on the rubber, betting on the points *ad libitum*.

Of all tempting games that have ruined their thousands of votaries, none, perhaps, with the exception of hazard, has done its work more effectually than *écarté*. It is a trial of

skill between man and man, and, as such, brings into play all the feelings of self-love and vanity that have their stronghold in the human breast. Then there is a sufficient degree of chance in the changes of the game to lure on the blind worshipper of Fortune, with the fascinating hope of a run of luck or an unlooked for "coup." Add to this the unlimited nature of stakes, depending on the will of two reckless and desperate gamblers, and the facility of doubling to recover a loss, allowed and perhaps encouraged by the more confident and fortunate player, and it is not to be wondered at that the money lost and won at such a game as this is to be reckoned by tens and hundreds of thousands.

The Count was a most agreeable person to play with, even to a loser. As he smoked his cigar, and displayed his white hands and glittering rings to the greatest advantage, he seemed utterly careless of the issue of those cards which he fingered so adroitly. Always ready to propose, or to allow of his adversary proposing; always accommodating as to the amount of stakes, and regardless of his reverses, he prattled on in his broken English, interrupted only by an occasional scrap from

some French song, as though it were a matter of perfect indifference whether he lost or won his hundreds on the game to me, and his ponies and fifties to Mr. Cotherstone or the Major, both of whom backed me now and then, although the latter, on two or three occasions, booked heavy bets against my success, all of which, I regret to say, I lost to him. This is a sort of specimen of the pastime, towards half-past three o'clock in the morning :

Mr. Nogo (much excited and dishevelled) :
“ I propose—”

The Count : “ Ver g-o-o-o-o-d ; how manies ?”

Mr. Nogo, looking at his score, now at three, the Count having marked but one in this game : “ Four.”

The Count deals them, and, helping himself, observes : “ I mark ze king.”

Mr. Nogo, having already lost about four hundred, declines to bet any odds, and the game proceeds, the Count winning the odd trick, which makes the antagonists even.

It is now my deal, and I turn up a diamond. We play our hands rapidly, and I lose the odd trick, but account for it by what my

adversary calls a "stupide mistake." I cut to him, and compare the scores. Mine is but three. I have two to get to win. The Count only requires one; and it is his deal. He bets me two to one. Something prompts me to take it. I feel confident of winning. "Done," I say, "in hundreds. Would you like to back him, Cotherstone? or the Major?" "Yes." They both back him to the tune of fifty pounds a-piece, to give me *my revenge*. The Count deals, sneezing violently, and making much use of an exquisitely-perfumed handkerchief, and turns up a grinning king. My capital melts, like snow before the sunbeam.

Reckless and annoyed, I persist in going on. Cotherstone good-naturedly endeavours to dissuade me. "You are out of luck, Nogo," he says: "take my advice, and shut up for to-night." The Major thinks I play a very "foine game; careless, bedad, but uncommon like me brother Cornaylius." And, ere I have concluded my evening's amusement, I deliver to the Frenchman a cheque on my London bankers, Flint, Golding, and Co., payable to self or bearer the sum of thirteen hundred and fifty pounds, in consideration of which, the accommodating "bearer," pulling out a

note-case quaintly embroidered in green and gold, liquidates a balance of a couple of hundreds, which I lose to the Hibernian Major and the smooth Mr. Cotherstone.

Is it credible that, as I drove home, far from dwelling on my losses, or having my eyes opened through the medium of my pockets, my thoughts dwelt on nothing but the image of my charming Kate, and the ride I had arranged to take with her the following afternoon, in Windsor Forest? Nor was it till I had nearly arrived that I remembered I had to bring Sharpes home to our joint abode. That wily gentleman had, however, preferred a moonlight walk of a few miles, to the expensive pursuit in which I had been engaged.

My servant dispelled the most delightful dream that was ever dreamt by infatuated youth in love, in liquor, or in debt, by bringing in hot water, and cold water, and soda-water, and all the necessaries of a dissipated gentleman's toilet, about half-past eleven on the following morning, accompanied by the announcement that Captain Raffleton had ridden over from the barracks, and wished to see me, if I was up. A quarter of an hour sufficed for the use of bath, razors, and soda-

water bottle; and, as I enrolled my glowing frame in the softest of dressing-gowns, Jack's merry face showed itself at my door; and, throwing himself into an easy chair, he questioned me, as I went on with my toilet, on the proceedings of the last few days, and my intentions for the future. "Have a care, Nogo," said he, when I mentioned that afternoon's intended ride with Miss Cotherstone as a reason for my not being able to take an oar with a party of his brother-officers, on a boating excursion up the river—"Have a care, old fellow, about these Cotherstones. I know very little of them; but what I do know is rather shady. You may depend upon it this is a regular plant, and these people are making a dead set at you for what they can get. As for the girl, I don't believe there's a wicked little devil out; and I know that she went on with that unfortunate Cripps till she made him a greater fool than nature had already done to her hand. Old Cotherstone's a regular sharper; and I was told this morning at breakfast, by a man very likely to know, that his wife was Lord Loosebrough's housekeeper, or something worse."

"I must really beg, Raffleton," I rejoined,

in my most stately manner, and in a towering passion at hearing my beloved and her belongings spoken of in such a tone, "that you will be good enough to recollect you are abusing people who are personal friends of my own; and as for anything that may be said of them at your mess-table, I think I know the amount of slander and nonsense that is talked at such gatherings too well, to give a word of credence to anything of the kind; and I allow no man to abuse my associates, more especially a young lady who—"

Here Jack burst out laughing, and finished my sentence for me in most disrespectful terms. "Who has cooked your goose for you, you mean, old fellow. Well, I am sure I do not wish to offend you, or any of your *friends* of two days' standing; but I hear you dined there last night, and I am only curious to know something about your party, and who was there, and what you did."

"Well, in the first place, there were Mr. and Mrs. Cotherstone."

"Hem!" says Jack. "Papa and mamma-in-law to-be, and the *fiancée* in muslin 'temptation,' with her Sunday face on: of *them* I say nothing!"

“Count Favoris—a very agreeable, gentlemanlike fellow, belonging to some legation.”

“Sharper of the first water. Exposed at Bath, under another name, for cheating at *écarté*; and kicked out of Cheltenham by ‘Bruising Bill,’ of the — Lancers, for bringing false dice to a private party. I know all about *him*.”

“Mr. Sharpes, who lost seven pound to Mrs. Cotherstone, at whist.”

“A shrewd, sensible fellow. He keeps that humbug Bloomsbury’s business together. Clever old woman that, to win *his* money.”

“Major and Mrs. O’Cleverly,” I added. “He seems a fine specimen of a real Irish gentleman; and she is still a very handsome woman.”

“A ruined horse-dealer, now principal partner in Macer’s gambling-house; and a broken-down actress, who married him under false pretences. My dear fellow, what a nest of sharpers you have got amongst! Now tell me honestly, had you any play, or did they keep you in ignorance of their practices, so as not to land their fish before he was thoroughly gorged?”

“Why, we played, certainly. I had a turn at *écarté* with the Count.”

“And he won of you—?”

“Thirteen hundred and fifty, altogether, amongst the party. Rather a facer, my dear Raffleton; but I assure you it was all on the square.”

Shall I ever forget the expression of Jack's handsome features when I came out with this disclosure? The prolonged whistle with which he found it necessary to give vent to his astonishment spoke volumes for the healthy action of his lungs, as did the concern betrayed upon his open brow for the goodness of his heart. Long and earnestly he argued with me upon my folly in what he was pleased to term being robbed with my eyes open. Warmly he expostulated with me on my infatuation for Kate Cotherstone, and unceasingly did he beg of me to break off all my engagements with this dangerous family, to leave for London immediately, and to abjure for ever the fatal and alluring passion for high play in which I had lately indulged.

“I have been an infernal fool myself,” said Jack, becoming quite eloquent upon the subject, “but that is no reason why I should not

endeavour to dissuade others from practices of which I know too well the folly and the end. Look here, Nogo ; I am now a subaltern in the Guards, with some few hundreds a year besides my pay, and all the tastes and pursuits of a man who can draw for thousands ; the consequence is, I never have a shilling that I can honestly call my own. I am hampered and distressed by bills and creditors, and driven to do things that, by Jove, I am perfectly ashamed of. I live from hand to mouth, and I never know whether the next month may not see me in the Fleet or the Insolvent Court. And all this is owing to my passion for play. Had I not been a gambler, Nogo, I might have done anything. I might have commanded a regiment of cavalry by this time. I might have earned honour and distinction in those glorious campaigns in India. I might have married ; ” and here poor Jack’s voice faltered—“ I might have married the nicest girl in England. And what am I now ? ”

“ Why,” said I, sedulously brushing away at my grinders, with my mouth full of tooth-powder, “ your position is a very good one, and you lead a very pleasant life, Jack. You

go where you like, and everybody is glad to see you. You do what you like, and nobody dreams of objecting to any of your proceedings. I have always considered you the most enviable fellow I know."

"All very well," resumed my military Mentor, coming out in a new light as a moral philosopher. "All very well. But happy as I seem to you, and good as are my spirits when you see me in society, there are moments of my existence bitter and miserable as remorse can make them. You have always heard of Jack Raffleton as a good-humoured, careless rattle, but little troubled with either money or brains, and thoughtless as that butterfly at your window. But it was not always so. There was a time when I had energy, ambition, and honest pride; when I had something to live for, and a motive for exertion. Put into a cavalry regiment as a fatherless boy of sixteen, I had all those hopes of advancement, all that thirst for distinction, too seldom felt but by those who have never known disappointment, but which, nevertheless, are the surest guides that lead to honour and renown. I was passionately fond of my profession; and as, step by step, I

watched my name working its way upward in the Army List, I burned only for an opportunity of showing that I was capable of winning for myself a name and character in the service. I had a moderate income, enough for all my wishes, and in those days I *never played*. It would have broken my mother's heart to be told her son was a gambler, and she was spared that trial. Alas! she died when I was twenty; and I sometimes think that had it not been so, her influence might have saved me from many of the follies and vices of my manhood; Heaven only knows! I had then another and even a dearer tie that should have kept me out of evil; but I was doomed. *Poor, poor Ellen!* We were to have been married as soon as I should have obtained my troop; and my idea then was, to exchange into a regiment in India, and take her out with me to a climate more likely to agree with her than the colder temperature of her native land. I was rising rapidly to the top of the Lieutenants; and with a thorough knowledge of my duty, good health, a good conscience, and my union with Ellen to look forward to, I was happy. Well, I could ride pretty well then; in fact, I can slip over a

country now as quickly as my neighbours ; and, in an evil hour, I entered old Brunette, a famous mare I had, for a great regimental steeple-chase. I backed her heavily, and won easily, landing four hundred on the event. From that day I date my ruin. Ellen heard of my triumphs, and wrote to congratulate me, poor girl ! at the same time she warned me of the danger of getting into habits of betting and play. I do not mean to say I became a gambler all at once ; but the fearful excitement of speculation, and the success which at first I met with, begetting hopes of improving my income, and so bettering the position of Ellen and myself, drew me gradually, but securely, into the net from which I am now warning you. It were a long story to tell you how I lost at length the greater part of my fortune, how I strove desperately to regain what I had so madly parted with, how I became more and more deeply involved, till the obtaining my troop was hopeless, and it seemed impossible to entertain an idea of marrying. Poor Ellen ! the suspense and misery she endured on my account were too much for a frame already enfeebled by a consumptive tendency, and she died at nineteen

of a decline." Jack's face was deadly pale as he added, after a pause of fearful distress :—
"I have never cared a farthing for a woman since, and never shall. After this, I became, as you may suppose, entirely reckless. A death-vacancy in the regiment, and a run of luck, set me on my legs again, and since then I have been what you see me. I live, as I told you, from hand to mouth. I have had all my worldly goods, horses, carriages, and furniture quivering upon the turn of a die, and this repeatedly. Some day it must go against me, and I shall pay up, but I shall walk out a beggar. As you say, people are glad to see me, and ask me to their houses, to shoot their pheasants, ride their horses, drink their wine, and abuse their cook : but Lord A. only invites me because he knows I am going on to Lord B., and Lord B.'s hearty and hospitable welcome depends upon the fact of my arriving from Lord A.'s. Which of them, if I had not a house to my head or a coat to my back, would give me half-a-crown to keep me from starving? Believe me, my dear Nogo, mine is a false, and consequently an unhappy position, and I warn you not to tread in my footsteps. Your hack is at the door; take your

ride with this new flame, flirt as much as you like, but do not commit yourself with the young lady; and, whatever you do, beware how you sit down to play with her papa."

CHAPTER X.

“ No—vain, alas ! the endeavour
From bonds so sweet to sever :
Poor Wisdom’s chance
Against a glance
Is now as weak as ever ! ”

T. MOORE.

“ *Cassio*.—Not to-night, good Iago. I have very poor and unhappy brains for drinking. I could well wish courtesy would invent some other custom of entertainment.”

OTHELLO.

“ I SUPPOSE I can trust her with you, Mr. Nogo,” said the anxious mother, as Kate and I walked our fretting horses away from Mr. Cotherstone’s door. Kate looked charming in her riding-habit, and sat upon her horse with an ease and grace all her own. The weather was delightful ; there was no groom to mar the happiness of our *tête-à-tête* ; and of all the glades in verdant England for love-making,

commend me to those that twine in leafy beauty round Virginia Water. But with all this, I was restless and disquieted. Jack's conversation with me in the morning had, to a certain extent, opened my eyes; I was not sufficiently infatuated to rush blindly into destruction, and I began to have that most unpleasant of all misgivings—a suspicion that I had made a confounded fool of myself. My fair companion, although in the highest glee when we started, although at first she rallied me, not without an object, on my very uncomplimentary lowness of spirits, soon saw with a woman's quickness that there was something wrong; and our ride, which I at least had looked forward to with such anticipations of delight, was fast verging into a rather dull *tête-à-tête*; when, at a turn in one of those grassy avenues, we came upon a galloping party of young Guardsmen, laughing, chatting, and smoking, enjoying their afternoon ride, and talking over the running of the different “favourites” at the late meeting. I blushed up to my eyes at the collision, more particularly as I detected certain exchange of glances among the party, that to my sensitive mind seemed to betoken no great respect for the

character of my companion or the "common sense" of her devoted attendant. Kate, who seemed to know the whole clique, behaved with admirable self-possession and *sang froid*; but I could *not* stand the free-and-easy manner with which she was greeted by young Fitz-Arthur and Captain Clare, nor the extremely good understanding that seemed to reign between my charge for the time being, and the military in general. Wider and wider were my eyes being opened; and such conversation as the following gave me more and more an insight into the character of Miss Cotherstone.

Ensign Fitz-Arthur (an attenuated youth of seventeen, who looked as if he lived upon "sardines," and sat up all night—as indeed was the case): "I *am* rejoiced to see you again, Miss Cotherstone. I hope you have recovered the ball. I sent the gloves; but I have kept the bouquet: I give you my honour I slept with it next my heart."

All this in an audible voice, to my unspeakable discomfiture.

Miss C.: "You silly boy! you know you sat up playing chicken-hazard till parade."

Captain Clare: "So he did, Miss Cotherstone—not so devoted as I am: I walked n

the park the whole night after the ball, and thought over our polka—nothing like the devotion of a middle-aged man.”

Clare was one of the handsomest fellows in London, and I began to get into a cold perspiration.

“ Well, Captain Clare,” was the guarded reply of the well-drilled young lady, “ if none of my admirers were more devoted than you are, I should indeed be badly off; you forget all about the waltz we were engaged for. Mr. Nogo, we had better canter on, or we shall hardly be in time to dress for our early dinner.” And bringing her horse well up to his bit, she started him at once into a hand-gallop, which soon took us out of sight of our military friends. This was entirely a volunteer on the part of Kate; and the casual mention of an *early* dinner, which was never served till past eight o’clock, was only a *ruse* to get away from a party who, however agreeable they might severally be in their proper places, as pleasant “ flirting-blocks”—to use her own expression—were decidedly *de trop* in a *tête-à-tête* ride with the gentleman on whom she had thoroughly made up her mind she would bestow the honour of her hand. Many a glance was

cast at me from beneath those black eyelashes, and many a hint given and opening afforded for an explanation which must have ended, as all such explanations do, in a shower of tears and a declaration of attachment; but I was not to be caught. I was sulky and immovable; and when I took Kate off her horse at her own door, and rode my hack home, to dress for the dinner to which I was engaged at her father's, we were upon more distant terms; and I felt "safer in my shoes" than at any previous period of our acquaintance. The fact is, my suspicions were fairly aroused: like all individuals not gifted with a superabundance of brains, my bump of caution was largely developed; a beautiful arrangement of Nature, which may be generally remarked in those who have not the ready-wit nor intellectual energy to get out of a scrape—it is but fair that these slower coaches should possess an instinct which prevents their getting into one. And so was it with me. From my boyhood I had a horror of deep water, even after I had learned to swim; I used to think it far safer, and just as pleasant, to float upon a surface, to the bottom of which I could at any time place my feet; and I have ever been

subject to misgivings when the magnitude of an undertaking on which I have once embarked has been fairly set before me.

“ Good gracious,” I thought, as I made my dinner toilet—a time during which the most reckless of mankind has no means of escaping from his reflections—“ what a nice mess I shall be in if I marry this girl, and find out, after all, I have been imposed upon ! if I take her down into ‘ my own county,’ and find people won’t visit her ! and still worse, that she does not care a farthing for me, and has perhaps entertained throughout a real attachment for Captain Clare, or Count Favoris, or some scape-grace who is fast on his way to ‘ the Bench !’ And then the mother ! Cotherstone is well enough, *if he is honest* ; but conceive Mrs. C. for a mother-in-law !—surely none but the celebrated ‘ bride’s mother’ in Cruikshank’s immortal epic, ‘ was ever known to speak so free,’ although proverbially a free-spoken race enough ! No, it will not do. I shall dine with them to-day, and after that gradually break off the acquaintance”—and with this doughty resolution I took the now well-known road to Cotherstone’s villa.

Kate was late for dinner ; but she came

down before the soup was off, looking like an angel who had been weeping over man's fallen lot—an angel, be it understood, extremely well-dressed, and far, very far different in figure from those whose proportions we are used to see so miserably curtailed in the creations of the sculptor. But weeping she had certainly been, and the swollen eyelids gave a softness of expression to her countenance that I had never seen before. I felt getting worse again.

“We have nobody to meet you, Mr. Nogo,” said Mrs. Cotherstone; “we treat you quite like one of the family. I asked Kate, says I, Kate, are you sure Mr. Nogo won't find it stupid being here in the family way? I mean,” added the matron, picking herself up, “nobody but ourselves. And Kate, you said you were sure he would like it better, and you knew his tastes—didn't you?” Calling my attention to that ingenious young lady, who, with a faint blush upon her gentle brow, was looking sorrowfully down into her soup-plate.

I muttered something about “delighted” and “much pleasanter,” and so on, but all in vain to stop the torrent of Mrs. Cotherstone's eloquence; till her husband, who was really

an agreeable man, came to the rescue, with a few words of well-bred quiet welcome, and a glass of dry champagne, fit, as the nursery-song expresses it, "to set before a king." Everything in his establishment was as well done for our small party of four as it could have been had mine host been entertaining a company of princes of the blood. The dinner consisted of just the right number of dishes, dressed to perfection; the servants waited noiselessly as spirits; the *épergne* was decorated with the rarest flowers, most tastefully disposed; the decanters sparkled with the raciest and most curious of wines; and Mr. Cotherstone seemed determined that none of these good things, particularly the latter, should be lost upon his guest. "Nogo, have you tasted that sparkling Moselle?"—"Nogo, have another glass of the dry champagne."—"Nogo, I can recommend that old sherry:"—till my brain began to reel with its effects, to do justice to all these hospitable challenges, and by the time I had finished my share of a magnum of 25, preparatory to coffee, ladies, and the drawing-room, I felt wound up to that pitch which is equally prepared for all pursuits

and contingencies, “from pitch-and-toss to manslaughter,” “from rat-catching to the use of the globes.”

With a flushed countenance and unsteady step I entered the drawing-room, to find it deserted: Papa calling to me from the rear, “that he was going to his own room to write a letter, which must be sent off the first thing to-morrow morning—to ring for coffee when I wanted it—and that he would join me in half an hour.” I have said the drawing-room was empty; but out of the drawing-room a door opened into the pretty little conservatory, with its lamps and flowers: and out of the conservatory the cooling night-breeze tempted me through another open door into the silvery moonlight, shedding its soft rays over towering shrub and smoothly-shaven lawn. The flutter of a white dress, flitting slowly down the gravel walk, soon attracted my attention and my footsteps. Mamma was gone to bed with a headache—Papa was safe for at least half an hour over his letter. The field was all her own. Now or never was the time. Young, romantic, and flushed with wine, I was in for a moonlight stroll alone with Kate Cotherstone.

It was truly a dangerous situation, and one from which few men on the sunny side of what people call the "prime of life" (an epoch always placed five years beyond the age of the individual making use of the term) would have escaped scathless ; but I was not daring enough to be an utter fool : the instinctive caution of my nature had taken fright, and notwithstanding the claret, notwithstanding the fascinations of scenery, moonlight, flowers, perfume, and white muslin, the warnings of Jack Raffleton were never present so vividly to my mind as when, putting her arm within mine, on the plea of fatigue, Kate walked me quietly away in an opposite direction from the house, and half playfully, though with a mournful accent on her melodious tones, warbled forth a fragment of Tommy Moore's harmonious ballad, "Fly to the desert, fly with me." Verily, Mr. Moore, you have a great deal to answer for ; and hard must be the heart that can resist your thrilling numbers dropping from "the lips that we love ;" but that hardness of heart was mine, and when, after one turn round the garden, during which a stoic might have envied my callousness, we returned to the realities of lamplight and the drawing-room, I had a bitter

sort of satisfaction in feeling that Kate could make nothing of me. I caught one glimpse of her countenance as we entered the conservatory, when she thought she was unobserved, and on those exquisite features I read an expression of contempt, hatred, and bitter spite, that made me shudder as I gazed: the curl on that beautiful lip would have made the fortune of a painter who had undertaken to depict Mephistophiles; and almost worse than all was the instantaneous change that came over her when she perceived she was watched. I could not have believed the "human face divine" was able so rapidly to alter its whole appearance, and wreath itself so suddenly in smiles. Once or twice during our walk my heart had melted within me, and I had nearly fallen a victim to the spells of the enchantress; but I had gathered more than usual firmness from the wine I had drunk, and I strenuously resisted her blandishments, and the impulse of my own heart; but now the mask had fallen off, and I re-entered the drawing-room completely sobered by my conflicting feelings, and with every faculty sharpened by the contemplation of the danger I had escaped. Cotherstone's good-humoured matter-of-fact counte-

nance, and carefully-ironed white neckcloth, recalled me more quickly than anything to the material world; and ere I had drunk my coffee, I was again lulled into security by the quiet ease with which he led the conversation, amusing and quaint as usual, as he discussed the every-day topics of *our world*, and the coolness and *sang froid* with which Kate joined in our discourse, as though nothing had happened, and the cherished schemes of the last fortnight had not melted away like an air-bubble during that fatal evening. "Kate, let us have a little music;" and she glided away to the piano-forte with a readiness and good-humour that was perfectly enchanting.

I am very susceptible to the influence of music; and in my then excited state, I felt half-maddened by the silver tones of that voice which I knew not yet whether I most loved or hated; and the consummate skill with which she modulated the tones of her instrument, now dreamy and soothing as the evening breeze, now startling and inspiriting as the trumpet-blast, roused my feelings to the uttermost, and I longed for some vent to the excitement that was boiling within. The tempter was close at my elbow. "Nogo, what do you

say to a pool at *écarté*, you, and I, and Kate? or if she will go on playing to us, we can have our quiet '*parti*,' and listen to her performance the while." There is an old Latin adage, often quoted, about which a good deal of money has been lost, as it is not to be found in any author of earlier or later date, but of the truth of which, nevertheless, there can be little doubt—and thus runs the aphorism, "*Quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat.*" And certainly, if Kate had set her heart upon my ruin, she had adopted the preparatory step of bidding me take leave of my senses, or I should never have dreamt of easing my mind by contending single-handed in any game of skill with my accomplished host.

The table was wheeled down within a yard or two of the piano-forte, the wax-lights on which threw a strong glare upon my "hand," as I took my seat in obedience to Cotherstone's courteous gesture, with my back to Kate, who, as usual, expressed her interest in my success. Shuffling the cards with a careless remark about "moderate stakes," mine adversary drew his chair to the opposite side of the table, and we entered upon the tug of war to the accompaniment of a rare and beautiful symphony,

exquisitely performed by our fair musician; and the ever-varying strains of which, now fading with a "dying fall" into almost imperceptible melody, now returning in fuller tones, and thrilling like some well-remembered voice upon the ear, required indeed the skill of a thorough and accomplished musician. I am thus particular in specifying the exact position of the parties and the circumstantial details of that memorable evening, as it was on this occasion I first discovered the extent of dishonesty and dishonour practised by a man holding by such means the position of a gentleman, and to whose course of fraud and swindling I had voluntarily exposed myself.

The game progressed and the stakes increased. Blind, reckless, and infatuated, for some time I rushed wildly into the excitement of the hour. Stakes were doubled and trebled with a carelessness of consequences that was perfectly frightful. Nothing could exceed the quiet courtesy of mine host, except, perhaps, the readiness which he showed in complying with my insane and reiterated proposals for higher stakes—always higher stakes—and still fortune went against me, and the anticipated

run of success—the change of luck—that “will-o’-the-wisp” ever present to the gamester’s mental vision—still fled on before and still eluded my disappointed grasp. At length came a reaction. The amount of my losses was dreadful to contemplate, and the effect upon my previous state of excitement was sedative in proportion to the magnitude of my difficulties: the continued run of ill-luck that had dogged me ever since I sat down to play was startling even to an inexperienced practitioner like myself; I never *had a chance*. If I held a bad hand Cotherstone would not allow me to propose; if a good one, he seemed to possess a magical insight into the value of every one of my court cards; and I derived the least benefit possible from those very smiles of Fortune which she was so niggard in bestowing. And ever, as my strategy was foiled, my cards out-trumped, and my tricks taken, would the pealing notes of that glorious symphony ring upon mine ear, like the sweet yet mocking laugh of some alluring spirit exulting over the ruin to which it beckoned. I know not what may be the effect of wine combined with intense excitement upon the nerves of others; but with me, after a certain point, it has ever

had a positively *sobering* tendency. There is a period at which, after the exhaustion of the spirits by their previous hilarity, the mind, fatigued and overstrung, sinks into the opposite extreme: if the excitement be still kept up, then, as in the case of the habitual drunkard, a state of helpless despondency will ensue; and such a course, if persevered in, will inevitably lead to that gloomiest of all the phases of insanity—"delirium tremens." But this is only the doom of those who, day after day, and month after month, devote themselves to the pernicious use of alcohol: and such victims are, fortunately, becoming more and more rare.

To return to my own sensations:—On the evening in question, the excitement I had gone through, both as to my better and worse feelings, had completely counteracted the effect of those potations which had at first enhanced its power; and by the time Cotherstone and I had concluded our third rubber, my brain was sobered, my faculties sharpened, and my nerves braced to an extent which enabled me to discover the ingenious and well-planned fraud of which I was the victim. It flashed upon me suddenly that Kate's symphony was ever loudest when my hand was most miserably poor; and

upon such occasions it invariably happened that her father denied me the privilege of improving my position by what is called "proposing"—a course which, as I was not disposed to pursue it with regard to his daughter, he took care I should derive no benefit from in my struggle with himself. I then reflected that Kate, from her position behind me, and that of her wax candles on the pianoforte, could see distinctly into my hand, and that in all probability so accomplished a young lady was as good a judge of *écarté* as she was of whist. No sooner did this suspicion cross my mind, than, disregarding the playing of my cards, I devoted myself entirely to watching the proceedings of my antagonist and his accomplice. Ere long I had abundant proof to satisfy my own mind as to the disadvantages under which I had that evening been fleeced of a small fortune. I remarked that Cotherstone never once *looked* in the direction of, or exchanged a single glance with, his daughter. He had a fine ear, and doubtless that was quite sufficient to guide him in his movements.

Once I shifted my chair in such a manner that my cards were entirely hid from Miss Cotherstone's view, and on that occasion the

liquid treble and resounding bass were steady and unvaried as a funeral march; but on a fresh game commencing, and my continuing in the same cautious position, the young lady left her seat for the ostensible purpose of fetching some more music, and as she passed behind me, deliberately and searchingly she scanned the cards in my hand, which for once were most favourable. Need I add, that when she resumed her place at the pianoforte, the waltz of Weber, which she commenced with such unrivalled skill, died away in its second bar into a faint and fitful melody like the music of a dream!

I was now convinced: but how to proceed? Determined not to sit still and be robbed with my eyes open, I was yet extremely averse, more particularly in the presence of a woman, to what is called "a row;" and my uncertainty how to act, and the difficulty—I had almost said "delicacy"—of my position, made me so absent and "*distract*," that it was impossible Cotharstone should fail to remark the alteration and embarrassment of my manner.

"Nogo," said he, in his usual frank, good-humoured manner, "you are bored with this; let us leave off. And Kate!" added the

paternal hypocrite, without a blush on his open countenance, "play us something lively, instead of that confounded thing you have been hammering at all night."

My half-inaudible and absent answer was not remarked; for Kate, dashing off a brilliant conclusion, shut the pianoforte, and, lighting a candle, retired for the night, leaving me with her father, in a state of painful indecision as to how I should act.

"Well, Nogo," said he, as soon as the door closed upon her retreating form, "I wish we had not played quite so high. I see you lose more than eighteen hundred; but of course, my dear fellow, you need not trouble yourself about an immediate payment, if it is any inconvenience to you. I only play, as you know, for amusement; and, therefore, whether you pay me now or two months hence little matters, or if you like to give me a bill for the amount"—

"Mr. Cotherstone," I replied, in a voice almost inarticulate with a mixed feeling of anger, annoyance, and a certain degree of apprehension for the probable consequences of such a demonstration, whilst my whole frame shook and my lips trembled with the violence

of my agitation, "I distinctly refuse to pay you one farthing of the money I have lost to-night, and out of which I have been swindled—yes, sir, most disgracefully swindled!—by an ingenious combination between your daughter and yourself."

I saw him look up for an instant with a guilty, startled expression, as I delivered this home-thrust, that convinced me more and more of the truth of my suspicions. His cheek grew perfectly livid, and his nostril dilated, with an expression that changed his whole countenance, and which even then brought forcibly to my recollection the glance his daughter threw at me that evening, in the conservatory. There was the same fiendish expression of malice and revenge disfiguring the shapely feature; the same scornful sneer on the well-cut lip, that betokened pain and disappointment, curbed and kept down by the strong will within. There was, if I may so call it, a family likeness of evil between father and daughter; nor did the well-schooled man of the world more readily recover his equanimity and usual bearing than she—that heartless girl—had previously done under parallel circumstances, when *her* schemes of enrichment and aggrandisement were foiled

by the clearsightedness of her victim. But Mr. Cotherstone had only one course to pursue; and Bayard might have taken a lesson in chivalry from the temperate bearing, the firm manner, and high tone adopted by this most consummate of knaves.

“I am at a loss to account for your extraordinary behaviour, Mr. Nogo,” was his quiet and gentlemanlike reply. “I should be sorry to believe that I had sat down to play with a gentleman in a state of intoxication—the only excuse I can think of for your conduct. You will allow me to ring for your carriage; and I trust that to-morrow you will see the propriety of making an ample apology. In justice to myself, however, I must insist upon the trifling sum we have been discussing being immediately paid over; and I am sure in your cooler moments you will see the absolute necessity of such a proceeding.”

And with these words, he bowed me out in a state of complete distraction, staggered by his coolness, alarmed at what I had entailed upon myself, and with no very clear perception, except that advice and assistance must immediately be sought from Jack Raffleton, and from him alone.

CHAPTER XI.

Sir Toby.—"He is knight, dubbed with unlacked rapier, and on carpet consideration ; but he is a devil in private brawl. Souls and bodies hath he divorced three ; and his incensement at this moment is so implacable that satisfaction can be none, but by pangs of death and sepulchre. Hob-nob is his word, give't or take't—"

Sir And.—"Plague on't, I'll not meddle with him."
Twelfth-Night ; or, What you will.

I do not set up for the character of having more nerve than my neighbours ; and I can conceive no anticipations, except perhaps those of a gentleman engaged to be hanged, more disagreeable than the forebodings which darken the existence of a quiet steady-going man, who for the first time in his life finds he has got a duel upon his hands. When I left

Cotherstone's house on the night of our *fracas*, it was evident to me that, come what might, the thing could only have one conclusion. If I steadily persevered in my resolution of refusing to pay, mine adversary would of course take such steps as should make it imperative on me to call him out. If, on the other hand, I accepted the unpalatable alternative of "booking up," I was not at all satisfied that the language I had made use of would not be sufficient to provoke a man in Cotherstone's ambiguous position to the immediate use of fire-arms at a short distance; and view it whichever way I would, one thing was clear—the business must end in a fight. With this soothing lullaby, I sought my pillow; and feverish was the rest, and disturbed the dreams, that hovered over my couch. Now I was Gustavus, of dancing memory, threading the lively "galop" with my fascinating Kate, through the conservatory, out into the garden, round the shrubberies, while Mrs. C. beat time, and nodded with a mother's pride in the graceful pair. Anon, Papa, in the guise of the jealous Ankerstrom, rises from the Ha-ha, with a long rifle-barrelled pistol in his hand, and Kate flying into the

house, disappears with an *eldritch* shriek. Then the scene changes, and I am driving with Jack Raffleton to witness a private trial, from which we both expect great things. It is early morning as we arrive upon the Downs; and the sun, just peeping above the horizon, throws his slanting beams over as fair a scene as merry England can produce. The lark is rising into the deep blue sky, marbled here and there with light and fleecy clouds; and never, I think, was the world so beautiful—never was life so enjoyable. I get up to ride the trial!—such are the inconsistencies of a dream—but the animal I bestride is rooted to the ground. “Give it him!” says Jack, as he puts a pistol into my hand. John Scott assumes the form of Mr. Cotherstone, and Alfred Day shoots suddenly up into a truculent-looking gentleman, six feet high. I find myself placed within arm’s length of my antagonist, and in a frantic attempt to cock my pistol, the hammer of which no power seems able to displace, I awake! with that heavy feeling of oppression which makes us conscious of misfortune, ere our faculties have shaken off the influence of sleep sufficiently to perceive the whole extent of the troubles in

which we are involved. It was later than I should have thought; and hurrying my toilet, I ordered my hack, and galloped off to the barracks at Windsor, to gather counsel and assistance from my friend Jack Raffleton. That gallant defender of his country was in the act of sitting down to a late and luxurious breakfast, after the fatigues of a "marching-order field-day" in the park, when I was ushered into his presence in the mess-room. Jack saw by my countenance that the mission with which I was charged was of no pleasant nature; but as several brother-officers were present, it was not a time for explanation, and I accepted, though with no great appetite, the cordial invitation to join these joyous spirits in their merry repast. Fun, good humour, and "*chaff*" were paramount as ever; and although in low spirits myself, and by no means in a frame of mind to make the companionship of a lot of devil-may-care fellows any more acceptable than the profuse breakfast which tempted my unwilling palate, I could not help envying my companions their hilarity, and thinking within myself, "What a jolly life these fellows lead!" The repast, interminable as I thought it, at length came

to an end, and over a weed in Jack's barrack-room I explained to him the scrape I had got into, and asked his advice as to how I was to act.

"Why," said Jack, to whom, as an oracle in these matters, I listened with undivided attention, "we have nothing to do but to keep quiet: you have distinctly refused to pay, and have, besides, given Cotherstone a pretty good piece of your mind. If he takes no further notice, well and good; though, from my knowledge of the man, I think such a chance extremely improbable. He is a fighting sort of fellow, confound him! and I recollect his 'parading' Brampton of the Bays, about a disputed bet at Newmarket: everybody said Brampton was right, but he had to pay notwithstanding; and Cotherstone, not satisfied with receiving his money, must stand upon his character, forsooth! and have a shot at him besides."

"How did it end?" I inquired, somewhat aghast to hear of these strong fighting inclinations.

"Cotherstone shot him in the wrist," was the reply: "the ball took off the lock of his pistol, and ran up his arm to the elbow. The

whole thing was badly managed by the seconds: however, it was hushed up, and made all right. But I'll tell you how we must act. It will never do for you to be out of the way should a message arrive. We will drive back to your villa together; stay there all the afternoon, and have an early dinner with a bottle of light claret,"—Jack settled it all as if it was a picnic—"and then if anybody calls we shall be ready for them, and I should hope, with a little good diplomacy, it will not be necessary to come to extreme measures."

With this consolatory remark, Jack ordered his dog-cart, and sending my horse back by his servant, we drove together through the glorious summer noon, striving to converse on indifferent subjects; but, as far as one of us was concerned, I can answer for the effort being most unsuccessful. Why did Windsor Forest look more beautiful, bathed as it was in that flood of sunshine, than it had ever looked before? Why had the hum of insects, the song of birds, the towering elms, the stately oaks, the massive shade of the deep woodland glades, a charm that, to my unawakened feelings, had never previously existed? Could it be that life, in all its beauty, all its capacity

for enjoyment, *that* life of which the sunny summer noon was so suggestive a type, had never been really appreciated, until the probability of its being hazarded, the possibility of losing it, had startled me into the consciousness of its innumerable blessings and delights? Certainly I found myself becoming more and more keenly alive to the pleasures of existence, and contemplating with more and more disgust the disagreeable necessity to which I was reduced. Gradually I tasked my memory to recall in long and ghastly array all the traditions of duelling that I had ever read or heard of—how a certain English gentleman, of undaunted courage and unerring aim, had been insulted by a French Count, celebrated as a bully by preference and a duellist by profession; how he retaliated by pulling the Frenchman's nose, and thus, placing himself in the position of the challenged, obtained the option of weapons, and chose pistols as placing him more upon a par with his antagonist than the small-sword; how they fought at "the Barrier," as it is called, beginning at twenty-five paces; how, ere one step was completed, both the pistols had been discharged, the Englishman being the least moment in ad-

vance, and shooting his adversary through the heart, at the same instant that the Count's ball grazed his forehead—the fact of receiving a bullet in the “pericordium” only disturbing the Frenchman's aim to that extent. How, upon another frightful occasion, at one of these sanguinary “*barrier*” duels, the younger combatant of the two, the hope and stay as he was the representative of his family, having failed in bringing down his antagonist at a long shot, was forced by the rules of the “*duello*,” and the exigencies of “*honour*,” to walk coolly up, with his discharged pistol in his hand, to be murdered in cold blood at the white handkerchief, placed on the ground half-way between the principals; how his adversary—a fiend in human form—laid his hand upon the youth's person, to feel the exact spot where his heart beat, and pressing the muzzle of his weapon against that well-spring of vitality, immolated him then and there with the words—“I pity your poor mother!” How, in later days, men had been shot dead in duels, such as the customs of society made inevitable, and the survivors rendered amenable to the laws of their country, on the capital charge; how, the option between being

shot and hanged was by no means agreeable ; and how it was very possible that the events of the next four-and-twenty hours might give me my choice of either catastrophe. In short, by the time we drove up to the door of my villa, and my servant informed me "that a gentleman was waiting to see me in the drawing-room," I had worked myself up into a state of nervousness and agitation, the least calculated to get me well through the business upon which I concluded the gentleman "had called."

An interview of half-an-hour with Major O'Cleverley, who turned out to be my visitor, did not serve, as may be supposed, to tranquillize my nerves. As my prophetic soul had already taught me, the Major had called on the part of Mr. Cotherstone, and was the bearer of a proposition, to which I felt it quite impossible to accede. I was to pay over the eighteen hundred immediately, as a proof of the most satisfactory nature that I had no accusation to make as to the manner in which it was won ; I was to apologize for my intemperate behaviour the previous night, laying the blame on the quantity of wine I had drunk, acted upon by the excitement of high play,

“and thus,” concluded the Major, drawing himself up to his full height, with a bland smile, “having made the ‘*amaunde honorable*’ customary amongst gentlemen, me friend Mr. Cotherstone will be happy to look over this most unfortunate ‘*fracaw*,’ and will be ready and willing—Bedad! he’s a good fellow, Cotherstone!—to shake hands with yerself, Mr. Nogo, and say no more about it.” I summoned up all my dignity to reply with becoming pomposity to the Milesian ambassador; and the upshot of it was, that I referred him for all further particulars to my friend Captain Raffleton, at that moment waiting in the next room. I thought this announcement rather staggered the Major, and I must do him the justice to say, that throughout the whole proceedings he was decidedly against warlike measures, if they could possibly be avoided; and no doubt it would have suited the purpose of himself and his confederate better could they have succeeded in fleecing their pigeon quietly, as they had one and all been before the public quite often enough to make such a display by no means desirable.

Jack’s interview with the Major soon came to a conclusion, my friend adopting a very

high tone—distinctly refusing, on my part, to pay the money, or withdraw the charge of cheating at play, which I had made against Mr. Cotherstone, and expressing a perfect readiness on the part of himself and his friend to abide the issue of the ordeal of single combat, the preliminaries of which were duly settled in my drawing-room during the Major's visit—time and place arranged, and even a jocose allusion, on O'Cleverley's part, to trains and steamboats, which might allow of the survivor's escaping to the Continent. Jack's reasons for this decided line of conduct were sensible enough in their way, though I could not help thinking that, like all men engaged as seconds in a duel, he did not quite see the "last appeal" in so important a light as it appeared to his principal.

"I do not think," said he, as he walked up and down the lawn after the Major's departure, "that these fellows will come to the scratch at last: depend upon it, they do not mean fighting. Their object, of course, is to get the money, and they are trying to bully you into paying; but we must be firm with them, and after all, if worst comes to the worst, we 'can wink and hold out iron' as

well as they can—by the bye, can you shoot any, Nogo?”

I was forced to confess that my pistol practice was by no means first-rate, and that, in fact, I had no idea of the weapon whatever; had certainly never loaded one; and very much doubted if I had even “let one off.” It was accordingly agreed upon, that, if we heard nothing further from “the enemy” before four o’clock that afternoon, we should consider such silence tantamount to a declaration of war, and prepare accordingly, Jack binding himself to give me correct instructions, as to the most authentic manner of holding, leveling, and discharging my pistol, with all and sundry niceties and arrangements peculiar to the “duello.”

What a long afternoon it was! I thought the shadows on that shaven lawn would never lengthen: I could settle to nothing: the uncertainty of my position was worrying and annoying to a degree. I would have given anything to have had the matter brought to a conclusion one way or the other, even if that way was to produce the dreaded encounter. I quite longed to take my ground, and fight it out like a man. I wandered in and out of the

house like some unquiet spirit ; smoked half a cigar, then threw it away ; glanced listlessly over the newspaper ; even went to the stables to look at my solitary hack, and found myself wondering when I should ride him again, and unconsciously quoting " the Arab's farewell to his steed." Three o'clock had struck, and the last hour of suspense was drawing on towards its close. At four we were to consider ourselves " booked," and to make all our preparations accordingly. Jack was even then upstairs, arranging his pistols, and humming a whole opera through as he proceeded with his task, and I was wondering where I should be this time to-morrow, and whether the sun would be shining as brightly, and the birds warbling as gaily, though I might be blind to sunshine and deaf to song, when the train of my reflections was interrupted by the tramp of a horse cantering up the grass ride that led to the stables ; and ere I had time to conjecture whether this was " the Major," with some pacific proposal, or a chance visitor from the barracks, unconscious of our dilemmas and ravenous for luncheon, Kate Cotherstone galloped into the stable-yard, pale and dishevelled with the speed at which she had been riding,

and lovelier than ever in her agitation and distress.

Ere I had recovered from my astonishment at her sudden appearance, she had jumped off her horse, put her arm within mine, and trembling all over like an aspen-leaf, had walked me through the French windows into the cool and half-darkened drawing-room, where she explained to me in broken sentences the object of her unusual visit. As far as I could make out—for Kate's nervousness, too evidently not assumed, made her at times rather incoherent—she had heard our voices raised as if in anger, when her father and I parted the previous night; she saw in the morning, by Cotherstone's manner, that something was wrong; and when the Major arrived, at so unusual an hour as nine o'clock, evidently in consequence of a summons from his friend, she felt satisfied from her previous experience in such matters that something serious was about to take place. Brought up in a school not over-fastidious as to its ideas of honour, the young lady had small scruple in listening at her papa's door, and making herself mistress of the conversation going on within, from which she learnt the whole particulars of our

disagreement, and the contemplated duel. She was obliged to pretend to be ignorant of everything till the time approached for her usual afternoon ride, when, dismissing her groom, and concealing her intentions from every one, she had galloped over to my villa, in a state of mind not to be described.

“And promise me, Mr. Nogo—promise me, I beseech you! that you will not allow this frightful business to end in a duel. Heavens! it is too horrible! Any sacrifice would be preferable. My poor father—a man twice your age; you never could lift your hand against him. If ever you cared for me—and there was a time—” said Kate, looking lovely beyond conception, and not acting now, “There was a time that you said my word should always be your law—if ever you cared for me, I entreat you not to fight with Papa! Promise me that you will agree to a reconciliation, and the whole thing may be hushed up. What will people say to my riding over here alone? I have sacrificed my character—surely you can make the comparatively trifling sacrifice of foregoing this dreadful alternative!”

What could I do? Here was a young, handsome girl, one to whom I had certainly

for a time been much attached, pleading with me for the sake of her father; using all the advantages of her beauty, her position, and her distress; employing all the arguments and sophistry that fall so persuasively from woman's lips, to induce me to forego this infernal duel, for which I had myself the smallest possible inclination—what could any man do? Of course I gave way, and promised her all and everything she required. She was, for once, honest in her purpose: there was no mistaking the daughter's eagerness and anxiety on the father's behalf for anything but truth, and I flattered myself I saw more into Kate's character, and liked her better, if I *loved* her less, during that painful half-hour, than in all our acquaintance and flirtations for weeks previously. The upshot of it was, that I put the young lady again upon her horse, after administering all the restoratives in my power—outward application of eau-de-Cologne, and inward consolation in the shape of a glass of brown sherry—happy in my assured promise, that come what might, no power on earth should induce me to harm a hair of her father's head, and pledging my honour as a gentleman that no effort should be wanting on my part to

avoid the proposed rencontre; and I then walked back into the house to relate all that had taken place to Jack Raffleton, who had discreetly remained up-stairs during the whole time of Kate's visit. We talked it over again and again, but we could make nothing of it: as Jack said, I had now succeeded in entangling the whole affair in such a manner that it required a wiser head than his to set things straight.

“ In the first place,” argued my indignant friend, “ we have an Irishman to negotiate with; then we have ‘ a leg ’ to deal with, whom we must either pay eighteen hundred, or fight. He is utterly reckless, and can shoot like blazes ! But that is neither here nor there. Then I have a principal to act for, who has never been concerned in an affair of this kind before, and who consequently depends or should depend wholly and solely on my experience. And lastly, just as I have screwed him up, and brought him to the stratch, a meddling little devil in ringlets comes poking her nose in, to make a mess of everything; and my friend, whose honour imperatively requires that he should go out and be shot at, the first thing to-morrow morning, pledges *his honour* that

he will do nothing of the kind ; and I am expected to reconcile all these impossibilities and contradictions ! By Jove ! it's enough to provoke a saint ! I'll tell you what, Nogo—fight *you must*. I can't help what you have promised : the Major and I settled this morning, that unless certain terms were agreed to, there was only one course. You are now in my hands : it is my duty to see you through this without loss of character ; and, by heavens ! fight *you shall* !”

Mine was the weaker mind—the more yielding spirit—and again I gave way. The events of that afternoon almost made me doubt my own free agency. I seemed to be a shuttlecock, bandied to and fro between Jack, the Major, and Kate ; and the only privilege of self-will that I reserved to myself was a determination to shoot in any direction but that of Mr. Cotherstone, thereby redeeming my promise to his daughter, and careless whether, by such a course, I might or might not endanger the safety of his second with a stray bullet. Ere Jack's remonstrances were completed, and I had come to this conclusion, the hour for our quiet little dinner had arrived ; and just as we were sitting down, who should make his

appearance, to add to the inconveniences of the day, but Captain Clare, accompanied, as usual, by young Fitz-Arthur. We could not do less than ask them to join us in our early meal; and the pair, who had been on horse-back all day, concocting some robbery, which they called "a good thing," were too happy to anticipate their usual dinner-hour, and do justice to our hospitality. The bottle of light claret, which Jack had so fondly anticipated, very soon multiplied itself into half-a-dozen. The new arrivals were both particularly agreeable men; Jack himself, especially when he had anything on his hands, was one of the pleasantest fellows in England; and there I sat, in that cheerful room, with its open windows and its lovely view, enjoying myself to the utmost. Aye, incredible as it may appear, of all the merry gatherings it has been my luck to attend, that was the one at which my spirits were most buoyant, and my laughter wildest and most hilarious—to which I look back with a sense of the keenest, the most thrilling enjoyment. Could it have been that the uncertainty—nay, the settled gloom—that made the future too forbidding to contemplate, enhanced beyond price the charm of the tan-

gible present? Was it that the consciousness of peril and distress, of which two of my companions could form no idea, gave to me, in that separate existence which they were unable to appreciate, a superiority that in such society I had never felt before? Was it that something within told me the resolution I had formed for Kate's sake was generous, and true, and worthy of the days of chivalry? or was it merely the sense of impending danger that had so bracing and exhilarating an effect? I cannot tell. Probably Damocles, who sat down to dinner every day with a sword suspended over his head by a single hair, might be able to analyze my sensations and explain my feelings. But the reaction came. Our guests were bound for London by an evening train; and as they lit their cigars, and mounted their horses to depart, the sun was still above the horizon; and oh, how beautiful was the world, in the mellow lustre of that calm June evening! How could we, reprobates as we were, dare to insult the majesty of nature, by the pursuit on which we entered, as soon as our guests had disappeared, and the coast was clear? We had now no time to lose in our preparations; and the deep

blue sky, serene in its holiness, looked down upon the premeditated guilt of two mortals, perfecting themselves by practice to destroy the life of a fellow-creature. With an accuracy that nothing but long experience could have attained, Jack had paced out the established twelve yards, from the trunk of a giant elm that shaded the lawn of our abode. A large sheet of white paper served as an excellent target; and, placed at duelling distance, I commenced my first lesson in the use of the pistol. Twelve paces is no very great interval between two gentlemen with arms in their hands; but to those who have never made the attempt, it is extraordinary how often an object, the size of a man, may be missed, even at that range, by an inexperienced practitioner. Certainly my nerves were not in the best shooting trim, and the way in which I had been spending the last four-and-twenty hours was not likely to be conducive to accuracy of eye or steadiness of hand; and I blazed away some half-dozen times without the slightest effect upon my gigantic antagonist, whose gnarled and knotted trunk remained scatheless as before. At last I hit him, though about ten feet from the ground; and Jack, out of pa-

tience with my repeated failures and slow progress, exclaimed, "This will never do ! I'll set the hair-triggers, Nogo ; and mind what you are about with them. Above all, be steady." The hair-triggers were accordingly set. The pistols, as Jack assured me, were true as rifles ; and, certainly, the mechanism of the locks, and the manner in which these fine triggers went off at the slightest conceivable touch, was curious in the extreme. I took one out of his hands, and, bringing the sight to bear with all the accuracy I could command, succeeded in planting a bullet well into the sheet of white paper, then doing duty as an antagonist. "Bravo, Nogo !" said Jack ; "this is what you required !" and, with a smile, he handed me the remaining weapon, prepared, as before, to go off at the very lightest touch. I had just taken it into my hands, with some remark eulogistic of its properties, when "bang !" I was startled by a sudden explosion right under my face, that made me leap three feet from the ground. The next moment, I felt a thrill in one of my arms, as though suddenly seared with a red-hot iron. I was conscious of every pulsation in my brain, beating with a sound like the stroke of a

church-clock. I heard Jack's voice, thick and indistinct as the shouts of a multitude. The giant elm and the evening sky were swimming before my eyes ; the short, mossy turf, to which I seemed suddenly so close, was heaving around me. I grasped it with the clutch of a drowning man. Of that last effort I have the most vivid recollection—but I can remember no more.

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CHAPTER XII.

“ And they will learn you by rote where services were done—who came off bravely, who was shot, who disfigured—and this they can perfectly in the phrase of war ; but you must learn to know such slanders of the age, or else you may be marvellously mistook.”

Henry V.

“ Now Lord be thanked for my good amends,”

Taming of the Shrew.

PEOPLE may talk of the blessings of health, and doubtless without health there can be but little enjoyment in any pleasure which life can bestow ; but of all delightful sensations commend me to those of what medical men call “ convalescence,” when every hour brings fresh proof of returning strength, and every function of Nature is alone busied in the one great object of “ getting well.” The sturdy labourer, whose frame and appearance are the

very types of "rude health," might have envied the soundness of my sleep and the keenness of my appetite during the fortnight or three weeks which restored to me the use of the arm I had myself so provokingly injured. In an airy and cheerful lodging, in a quiet street not very far from the Park, with all the new novels to read, with all my acquaintances delighted to while away an idle hour in my society, with the most agreeable of doctors, who persisted in looking upon me as a hero who after several exchanges of shot had at length been taken unwillingly off the ground with an injury that nothing but his own skill could have healed, I found the confinement to one room and the regimen required of a patient anything but tedious or disagreeable.

Jack Raffleton, who had been kindness itself after the accident, and who perseveringly cursed his own stupidity in ever trusting "such a muff as Nogo with hair-triggers," had arranged my "affair" with Cotherstone with a tact peculiarly his own. Pay I certainly did, but not to any very large amount; and as the musical sharper was compelled to leave England on business of his own, at very short notice—in fact, was in that pleasant predicament which

the Yankees call "a fix," having made Tattersall's too hot to hold him, and got into some stock-jobbing scrape into the bargain—a compromise was effected, by which in consideration of certain "value received," nothing more was to be said, on either side, as to his ingenious method of playing *écarté*, or my non-appearance at our matutinal trysting-place.

The worst of it was the manner in which those infernal Sunday papers got hold, as usual, of the wrong end of the story; and as each had its own absurd version, of course from the very best authority, my leisure was amused with paragraphs such as the following:—

"A hostile meeting is stated to have taken place between a well known sporting character and a young and fashionable millionaire (?). The parties met on Tumble-down Common, and we regret to say that both were severely wounded. Two military gentlemen officiated as seconds. Of course until a judicial investigation has taken place, more especially as one of the combatants is in immediate danger, it would be premature to give the names of these offenders against the law."

"We have to record a *rencontre* of a hostile nature which has taken place between Mr. T-l-b-r-y N-g-o and J. C-th-st-ne, Esq. The *causa teterrima belli* is said to have been the attentions paid by the former gentleman to the fascinating and beautiful daughter of the latter.

Mr. N-g-o was attended on the ground by the Hon. Capt. R-ff-t-n, and the well-known Major O'-C-r-r-ly officiated for Mr. C-th-st-ne. Both gentlemen fired in the air!"

"The duello again! Another of these unmanly and un-English performances has again taken place, in the vicinity of Ascot, on the very ground immortalized by the game and never-to-be-forgotten struggle between 'The British Buster' and 'Turner's Black.' Our readers need hardly be reminded that exhausted Nature gave way, and the 'Buster' ceased to breathe after fighting the unprecedented number of 157 rounds! And now two assassins have desecrated this hallowed spot; and instead of settling their differences by 'peeling' and 'to it like men,' have had recourse to the cowardly pistol as an arbiter of their quarrel. England! indeed thy glory hath departed; and our upper classes have themselves to thank for hastening thy decay."

Such were a few of the versions furnished by these caterers for the amusement of the public. The *Illuminated Gazette* presented its readers with an exceedingly well-composed tableau, in which were portraits of the two belligerents, their seconds, and Kate Cotherstone in the distance. The great daily organ of public opinion itself found room to insert a couple of lines, in which the whole business was disposed of under the heading "Determined Suicide by a Gentleman:" and as far as my unfortunate accident was concerned, this

was perhaps nearer the truth than any of them. But the *Morning Muffineer*, that chronicle of the fashionable world, was more mysterious, and yet more diffuse, than all the rest of its contemporaries put together. First of all it had heard of "a rumoured *fracas* in the higher circles, involving unpleasant disclosures, and ending in a personal collision." Then, "it was whispered that the elopement of a young lady in the vicinity of Windsor had led to a hostile encounter between the gay Lothario and offended parent, in which the latter was severely wounded." After this, "it was informed that the late 'affair' between two well-known sporting gentlemen, had its origin in certain play transactions to a large amount: the younger belligerent lies dangerously wounded at his house in town." Lastly, it stated boldly that it "was happy to hear Mr. Nogo was rapidly recovering from the effects of his wound, and that amputation was fortunately unnecessary. Mr., Mrs., and Miss Cotherstone, have taken their departure for the continent."

With all these paragraphs, and with all the different stories told by my different friends, each knowing his own version "for a fact," I was quite a hero during the nine days that

elapsed, before some fresher "wonder" called off the attention of the gossiping and the idle. I began to think at last that I was in truth the champion they took me for; and although I could not quite persuade myself that I had actually received Cotherstone's fire, I took all the credit of having screwed my courage up to fighting pitch, and was firmly persuaded that I should have gone through the affair with as much coolness and determination as everybody seemed to think I had, more particularly as Jack Raffleton himself declared, "Nogo showed a great deal more pluck than he should have expected—but nervous, confoundedly nervous."

My little doctor, as well, added largely to this hallucination; nothing would persuade him that the wound to which he applied so much surgical skill was the effect of accident; and although, like other well-principled men, he abhorred duelling in the abstract, still he could not divest himself of a certain degree of interest and admiration when brought into personal contact with a man whom he believed to have "stood fire" unflinchingly. How often we see this amongst mankind!

I am afraid more of us are cowards at heart than we would fain believe, as it is only to the

principle of cowardice that we can attribute a blind admiration of that which is in itself wrong, merely because accompanied by a personal risk that we dare not ourselves incur. Woman is supposed to be most susceptible to the fascination of courage from her own deficiency in that quality; and it must be something of woman's weakness in our hearts that makes us gaze with approbation, which amounts almost to envy, at the prize-fighter or the steeple-chase rider, Van Amburgh in his cage, or Mr. Green in his parachute.

Doctor Dottrell was besides, like many who belong to the graver professions, devoted in theory to those field sports from which in practice he was debarred by his business; and if there was one thing the Doctor was really proud of, it was a certain black cob, the image of himself, which he drove with the careful and sedulous air of a daily coachman working a heavy load for a long distance over a bad road. His gloves and hat betokened "the Jehu"—the rest of his "get up" was strictly professional; but the Doctor at heart preferred *Bell's Life* to all the pharmacopœia, and looked forward to his week's partridge-shooting with his cousin in September, more than to all the rest

of the year put together. Now he had taken it into his head that his patient, Mr. Nogo, was a sportsman of the very highest calibre; an infatuation first suggested by my admiration of the black cob—a really clever, serviceable little animal. And a few words which I happened to drop alluding to Leicestershire, Scotland, and other sporting localities, served to confirm him in this opinion, to a degree which was inexpressibly ludicrous, when, as was often the case, he asked my opinion upon some matter of elephant-shooting or tiger-hunting, of which I knew as much as the man in the moon.

“Regular exercise, Mr. Nogo,” he would say—“regular exercise will soon set us on our legs again, when once the injury to the ‘biceps’ is sufficiently restored to admit of personal exertion. To a man like yourself, devoted to the sports of the field, and accustomed to negotiate the ox-fences of Leicestershire, and to breathe your lungs in the pure air, and up the steep hills of the Highlands, I need not insist on the necessity of vigorous muscular exertion. I am myself always in better health when partridge-shooting with my cousin in Berkshire, and Mrs. Dottrell declares

I am never so well as when I come home fagged and tired after ranging the stubbles with dog and gun. We must provide some substitute, Mr. Nogo, even in London, for this kind of severe exercise ; and if I might venture to recommend a little fencing, or even—ahem—sparring, whilst you remain in town, I think I may stake my professional reputation that you will acknowledge the benefit of my advice.” Such was ever the burden of the good little doctor’s song ; and I verily believe that in his own heart he was firmly persuaded that if a man could only remain in a state of profuse perspiration in the open air, during twelve hours out of the twenty-four, he would live for ever.

After the worthy Esculapius had taken his final departure, and I had for the last time indulged myself by watching the knowing manner in which he patted the black cob, glanced over the “tackle,” as he called the harness appertaining to his one-horse chaise, shook his beaver into its place on his little round head, drew on his gloves, and squared his elbows, preparatory to turning the corner into the next street, where another patient resided, I bethought myself seriously of follow-

ing his advice; and feeling that my arm was now as strong as ever, and that a sedentary life with an increasing appetite had brought about the usual effect of making all my waistcoats too tight, I resolved on putting myself into the hands of some professor of self-defence, who whilst he knocked me about for his amusement, and worked me into a state of complete exhaustion for my improvement in condition as for his own benefit in pocket, should teach me that noble science, so useful at Vauxhall or Cremorne when the ambitious snob, or slightly inebriated "gent," vapouring about "punching heads," or in his vinous courage too abruptly coming to conclusions with a graduate in the art, finds perchance that he has unwittingly "caught a Tartar." Besides, I was now considered, amongst my friends and acquaintance, "a determined sort of fellow," "a man of undoubted pluck," "as game as a pebble, and stands no nonsense;" and it would be quite in keeping with this sort of character, that I should be able, if necessary, to vindicate my reputation in a chance row, or hand-to-hand conflict with some too "bumptious" adversary of the baser sort.

Accordingly, after a consultation with several of my young associates, beardless Guardsmen, and fast clerks in public offices—but one and all appearing to know everything that was to be learnt in London, and never to be at a loss—it was decided that I should immediately enter upon a course of tuition from the hands, or rather the knuckles, of no less a person than “The Muff of the Minories” himself. This was indeed a cause for self-gratulation, “The Muff” being acknowledged as the best glove-fighter of the day. His career in the ring had been, as he himself allowed, unfortunate. Out of five appearances, two battles had gone against him, as he said, by gross partiality on the part of the referee, his enemies declaring that each event was what is familiarly denominated “a cross.” Of the third contest in which this hero was engaged, it is only necessary to say, that he was deprived of the laurels which he considered his due, by going down ignominiously, without a blow; as in the fourth he himself purposely delivered a foul stroke on the body of his antagonist. An opportunity, however, again offered itself for wiping away the stain of previous defeats, and the fancy invested largely on

“The Muff,” in his great match for 100 sovs. a-side, with the “Slasher of St. Giles.” Money was posted, articles entered into, a referee agreed upon, time and place named, and for once the battle was fought upon the square. Fortune favours the brave. “The Slasher,” though of smaller proportions and lighter build, beat his man out of time in the first ten minutes; and from that hour “The Muff” bid adieu to the Prize Ring, and devoted himself to the infinitely more agreeable and lucrative pursuit of knocking gentlemen about in their own private apartments. Of his personal appearance I need only state that he was a low, deep-chested, powerful man, very much let down in the shoulders, which gave him an appearance of being smaller in every way than he really was; and rejoicing in what is appropriately termed, “a fighting nob,” namely, a villanous-looking countenance, with deep-set twinkling eyes, projecting lips, and a broken nose.

Such was the worthy that, much to my servant’s astonishment, made his appearance in my lodgings immediately after breakfast, one sweltering morning in July, and suggesting “beer” as his favourite refreshment in reply

to my hospitable inquiries, pulled his extremely short hair, as he offered his "sarvice" to me ere he buried his unprepossessing physiognomy in the grateful pewter. This ceremony concluded, the professor calmly expectorated on my French carpet, and expressed his readiness to commence the lesson, premising that as his was the only method of teaching the art of boxing, it would be as well were I at once to dismiss from my mind, and endeavour totally to forget all my previous knowledge on the subject, to me by no means a difficult task.

"Most of 'em teaches nothink," argued "The Muff;" "but I teaches this—to keep the 'ands allays ready to 'stop' and to 'return,' and above all, never to parry a blow with your 'ead."

I was by this time placed "in position," and the latter self-evident maxim being enforced by a lightning rap, which made my eyes water and my nose swell, served to convince me that my present attitude of self-defence was one in which every portion of my frame was most utterly helpless. Do what I would, turn which way I might, the professor's glove struck, true as clock-work, exactly between my eyes ;

and as the lesson proceeded, so did my firm conviction that nature had never intended me for a bruiser, and that art would never succeed in making me one. Did "The Muff" generously devote his ugly face as a target to my blows, encouraging me to "'it out ! let it come from the shoulder," and reassuring me with the faithful promise that there should be "no reprisals," a sharp electric pain in my elbow-joint warned me that all my strenuous exertions were "lost in air," and the forbidding object at which I aimed was still untouched. Did I summon up all my fortitude and resolution to parry the adversary's rapid blow, even if I succeeded in escaping the first half of what he called his "one, two," the latter was as certain to come in "flush" on mouth or nose, as it was to confuse and utterly bewilder all my ideas ; and thankful was I indeed when the lesson came to a conclusion, which it did at the same time as the beer ; "The Muff of the Minories" taking his departure with a kind promise that he would be with me at the same hour regularly, "Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays," and leaving with me two tickets for a sparring benefit, for which I paid him the

sum of ten shillings, and an odour of violent exercise, which open doors and windows seemed unable to alleviate.

According to promise, these lessons of chamber practice were day after day repeated ; and by dint of constant pommelling, I did certainly in time obtain sufficient quickness to guard my own face, at least from the assaults of my instructor, to whose method I was getting accustomed. A hard hitter I should never have become, nor will all the painstaking in the world give a man that facility of "letting out," which depends, like swift bowling or long throwing at cricket, entirely upon natural formation ; but I began to be able to "spar" in a sort of way, and from feeling tolerably at home "with the gloves," foolishly imagined that I should prove a dangerous "customer" in a real fight.

The primary object, however, for which I had engaged "The Muff's" services was now gained—my health and strength were thoroughly re-established, my muscles enlarged, and my weight decreased.

The vigorous exercise of my mornings made a ride in the park quite unnecessary in a salubrious point of view, and I began to take

up a strong *penchant* for driving. My phaeton horses were well-bitted, quiet, and perfect as animals could be; and emboldened by the success with which I steered them through the crowded streets of London, I bethought me that it was a pity to waste so much good coachmanship upon a pair, and that I, as well as others, might aspire to the honours of "a drag" and "a team." Besides, a coach would be so useful to my friends; for since my scrape with Kate Cotherstone, I lived entirely amongst a "man" set. I could take my party to races, to Richmond, and to Greenwich; and now that I had set up as a sporting character, it would be the very thing to have fellows talking about "Nogo's coach," and Nogo's charioteering talents. The idea once broached was not long in being carried out.

Of all people in the world, who should call on me, one morning, as I was thinking over my scheme, but Segundo?—the very man to put me in the way of doing that which I was now so ambitious to effect. Poor fellow! he looked thin and careworn, and was more seedy in his dress and appearance than formerly; in fact, his object in seeing me was to request some pecuniary assistance, which, small as it

was, I unhesitatingly offered. As we warmed in conversation, and talked over old times, his ancient swagger and quaint fun began to peep out ; but he was still mysterious as ever as to what he had been doing, or where living since I saw him last ; all I could gather was that he had been abroad, and, notwithstanding all his talents and pursuits, had been at times wofully "hard-up." He jumped at the notion of a drag ; in fact, as he said, it was quite in his line. "The very thing, Nogo. I saw this morning a capital coach, to be sold for a mere song. She is as good as new, dark-green picked out with red ; the man she belongs to is in hiding, but I know where he is, and you can have her for half nothing, money down. I saw you driving two bay horses yesterday, in the park, that would make perfect wheelers ; and we can pick up a couple of leaders on Monday, at Tattersall's (at least you can send your groom to do so, I shall not be able to go there for a week or two), for five-and-twenty pounds a-piece. Capital ! I'll go and buy the coach directly." And without more ado, away marched my friend, looking more himself, now that he had got something to arrange, than he

had done during the whole time we sat together.

The coach was soon bought ; a very handsome chesnut with a game leg, and a little grey mare, were purchased at Tattersall's for no large sum, as leaders ; and after a few early lessons round the parks, with Segundo on the box as my Mentor (in fact he did me the favour of breakfasting, dining, and living with me altogether), I thought myself as capable of taking my team and my load down to a convivial Greenwich dinner-party as any one of the knights of the whip that start weekly from the Crown and Sceptre or the Trafalgar.

The morning rehearsals having proceeded so favourably, a performance in public was soon decided on ; and ten days' notice enabled me to secure a sufficiently numerous coach-load of swells to grace my drag on its downward journey to Greenwich, there to eat turtle, flounders, and white-bait, and drink bad wine, at my expense. Sunday, I am ashamed to say, was the day chosen for our demonstration ; nor do I understand why, amongst all the days of the week, that should be the one invariably set apart for the noisiest and most

convivial gathering afforded by the hebdomadal list of engagements which decorates the chimney-piece of a man about town.

However, Sunday came, and with it my well-appointed drag, and really neat-looking team. We were to take our departure from Limmer's—that unceremonious hostelry, whose doors, like those of another much-thronged locality, stand open “night and day.” In fact, so careless are its inhabitants of times and seasons, that I well remember one of its most constant frequenters giving as a reason for his preference, that he could not enjoy the same comfort elsewhere, of never knowing what o'clock it was. “I sleep,” he said, “till I feel inclined to get up. My bed-room *always* requires candles; and when I come down and order breakfast after the rest of the world have dined, the waiter looks as little surprised as if ten o'clock at night was the usual time for every one to begin the day.” From this accommodating “Liberty Hall” we started accordingly. And Segundo, who sat by me on the box, had indeed done his best to get together a very agreeable and merry party. All that were in difficulties, all that were in debt, seemed to congregate upon the roof of

my coach ; and such an array of curling whiskers, trim moustaches, well-brushed hats, and choice spirits, I have seldom seen even on that much-affected road.

We left a volume of smoke behind us that would not have shamed a goods-train on the London and North-Western ; for lips ringing with jest, fun, and repartee were graced with regalias, the shortest of which must have averaged eighteen inches. We called, according to promise, for Lord Loosefish, at his lodgings in Bond-street, and proceeded thence boldly down St. James's-street, recklessly braving the ordeal of the bay-window at White's. " Confound that chesnut leader ! how short he went upon the stones ! " I knew, as well as if I heard it, that some splenetic dandy, in that crowded morning-room, was good-naturedly remarking to a brother-cynic—" Look here, Jim," or " Cis," or " Bo," or whatever the familiar abbreviation might be—" look at that team of cripples ! " And the worst of it was, I dared not hit him—I mean the chesnut—till we were safe down the hill. However, I paid him off when we turned the corner into Pall-mall, and with such good will, that I caught the end of my thong in the grey mare's splinter-

bar. This set her a-kicking; and had not Segundo jumped down and put us right with wonderful dexterity, I might never have got any farther than the Carlton Club.

London, on a Sunday, is not overcrowded with vehicles; and we got on swimmingly till we arrived at Westminster Bridge. Here, a trifling and momentary indecision on my part got us jammed in between two omnibuses, a hired barouche, and an extremely impertinent Hansom cab. The knot, however, at length untied itself; and, thanks to Segundo's advice and injunction, "Now go on, Nogo—now a little to the right—don't let this fellow cut in!" we cleared the metropolis triumphantly, and bowled up to the door of the Trafalgar without any further impediment or hindrance.

I have but a misty recollection of the dinner, since, notwithstanding the predominant idea in my mind, that I must keep sober to drive my party back to town, the clatter of plates, the confusion of tongues, the constant challenges to slake a throat on fire from devilled white-bait, the fun and merriment, to say nothing of cigars and singing, were enough to confuse a stronger brain than mine. Notwithstanding my endeavours to the contrary;

notwithstanding that my contribution to the amusements of the company was confined to applauding and “encoring” their songs—songs of which “love was the theme,” the material, however, far outstripping the ideal; notwithstanding my resolution to avoid “mixing my liquors,” and my stedfast adherence to champagne and sherry, I cannot but think I must have been a little exhilarated, possibly by the turtle, inasmuch as I have reason to believe that upon several different occasions I invited the whole party to dine with me again on that day week, in the same locality—a sentiment received with shouts of applause, and carried without a dissentient voice.

The dinner being mine, the bill—that bitter ingredient in the cup of pleasure—was upon this occasion dispensed with; and the midnight hour was rapidly approaching, when Segundo whispered to me to come and look after the drag, as it was time to be off. My absence was the immediate signal for loud shouts of applause: I presume my friends were again drinking my health; and if I might judge by their shrieks of laughter, the toast was accompanied by some very humorous observations.

With supernatural gravity, I walked down-

stairs, and, guided by its two lamps glaring fiercely through the surrounding darkness, I found my drag, to which Segundo, sober as a judge (which I must do him the justice to say he always was, whatever quantity of wine he swallowed), and two rather incoherent ostlers, were busily harnessing my impatient team. "You're no use here, Nogo," said he, with his usual abruptness. "Go and get some soda-water, and try to coach us home steadily. I'll sit on the box with you." No more satisfactory reply occurring to me at the moment, I indistinctly stated that "it was all right," and meandered my way through the darkness back again towards the house, to administer the sedative Segundo recommended.

I never knew exactly how it happened, but all at once I found myself engaged in a lively discussion with a sort of half-ostler half-horse-dealer-looking fellow, who accused me violently of shoving against "his missis," as he called her, and gave me a good deal of friendly advice as to supporting my claim to be considered a gentleman by behaving "as sich." What I had done to raise his ire, I could not guess; but, casting my eyes over his corporeal proportions as well as the darkness would al-

low, it occurred to me that now was the time to put in practice all the advantages of that science which the "Muff of the Minorics" had so sedulously taught me, and, assuming a strikingly-imposing attitude, I threatened to stand no more nonsense, but to punch my antagonist's head. Not a word did the little man reply; but, ere I could well distinguish his features in the darkness, I received "one" between the eyes, and another in the waist-coat, that made a flash vivid as the lightning start from the one spot, whilst all the breath in my body seemed to take an instant departure from the other. It was in vain to "spar," and "feint," and "guard," and try to "counter:" the little man might have no science, but, confound him! he could fight like a good one; and, after the most disagreeable five minutes I ever recollect to have spent, Segundo came to my assistance, to find me breathless, bleeding, and dishevelled—very angry, but inwardly resolved never again to "box without the muffle;" my active antagonist taking to his heels, with this pithy remark: "There's more of 'em coming, I make no doubt; but I've sarved that one out, at any rate—blow me!"

Much was the condolence I received from my friends ; nor, in my account of the transaction, did I think it necessary to state that my adversary was, to the best of my knowledge, untouched : on the contrary, I left it to be inferred that we had both given and taken severe punishment ; that I knew the “ party ” as a low “ fighting man,” but that I should have paid him off handsomely, had he not run away ; and finally, swore that my revenge was only put off to a more convenient season.

Despite of Segundo’s remonstrances, I expressed my determination, mauled as I was, to drive back to town, incited thereto by sundry audible expressions of encouragement and approbation, to the effect that I was “ a rare good plucked one,” “ game to the back-bone,” &c. ; and, lighting a fresh cigar, which smarted uncommonly against my cut and swollen lip, I took hold of the team, bid my charge “ sit tight,” and were soon rolling rapidly through the darkness, with the lights of Greenwich far in our rear.

It is wonderful—nay, providential—that more accidents do not happen at night to those aspiring spirits who love to drive after dinner. Certainly, horses go freer and plea-

santer in the cool night-air, run more up to their bits, and consequently are less liable to get into scrapes; but many a Jehu, I fear, gets upon his box to guide the more rational animal home, whose own legs would hardly convey him safe across Piccadilly. How far I might have walked without holding on, it is impossible to say; but I sat behind my free-going team with all the confidence of a Peyton in days gone by. My horses, inspirited by the cool breeze, and cheered by the melodious tones chaunting in chorus behind them, shook their harness, and rattled away merrily, as if they too had dined on white-bait and champagne. Segundo, I could see, kept a watchful eye upon the leaders, and was ready, at an instant's notice, to take the reins; but I laughed at him for his nervousness, and, for a time, all went prosperously as could be.

“Pride goes before a fall.” I was just congratulating myself on my triumphant *débüt* as a coachman, and Segundo had relaxed his attention sufficiently to turn round and get a light from the man behind him, when bang! ere I could pull them up, or pull them off, or pull them anywhere, my leaders ran slap into the ill-omened cart of an early fishmonger, or

a belated baker ; and, ere I could scarce tell what had happened, my wheelers were on to him, my pole was threatening him with instant impalement, and harness, horses, baker, and cart were all mixed up in a state of terrific confusion, that to this day it makes me shudder to think of. Segundo and the load were down in an instant ; the baker, or whatever he was, behaved like a trump ; but the smash was irremediable, and we returned ignominiously to town with an humble pair.

I may remark that the grey mare—an animal of an irritable disposition—kicked herself clear of everything ; and the chesnut horse's game leg was, from that day, “ gamer ” than ever.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ Man, being reasonable, must get drunk ;
The best of life is but intoxication.
Glory—the grape—love—war : in these are sunk
The hopes of all men, and of every nation ;
Without their sap, how leafless were the trunk
Of life’s strange tree, so fruitful on occasion !
But to return—Get very drunk ; and when
You wake with headache, you shall see what then.”

A GREENWICH dinner—comprising as it does every variety of eatable and drinkable capable of being consumed by that omnivorous animal, man—followed by a sharp and breathless set-to, in which the individual lately replenished has indubitably come by the worst, is not by any means fair usage of a digestion which has already been taxed beyond its powers by the numerous and successive entertainments of a

London season. It has been the opinion of many deep and experienced medical men, borne out by the example of the brute species, and corroborated by the natural tendency to slumber so apt to steal over those who have dined "not wisely, but too well," that the process of digestion goes on best in a state of perfect repose, and that all extra-expenditure of vigour, whether of mind or body, unfairly deprives the stomach of that energy which can alone enable it to cope with the mighty task of reducing and arranging its various contents into an orderly and health-restoring whole.

"Throw your feet on a chair!" says good Doctor Kitchener, "to the end that all your powers may be concentrated upon that one important organ."

"Drink a bottle of port, with deliberation and gusto, in the society of some agreeable and long-appreciated friend," says another valetudinarian and *bon-vivant*.

"Bring me a cigar and the bill," exclaims the very bagman, to whom time is of the utmost importance, and yet who seduces himself with the black, acrid cabbage-leaf that wreathes its foul yellow vapour around his shining physiognomy, into the belief that he

is soothing his nerves, and assisting his digestion, with the pause of contemplation and repose that serves to consume that truly British cigar.

Not a labourer but smokes his pipe in peace after his much-relished and much-required meal. Not a sailor, miner, hill-man, or operative, but devotes a few spare minutes of his valuable time to that species of rumination which he catches instinctively from the very cattle who chew their cud so composedly and contentedly in the fields. But one and all seem agreed that during the important period which follows a heavy and hearty meal, any strong muscular exertion of the body, any violent emotion of the mind, is as prejudicial as it is disagreeable. Of all things, then, a combat "*à l'outrance*" with the naked fists, combining as it does the ungovernable passions of emulation, anger, and fear, with the very severest description of bodily exercise, must be the worst conceivable dessert for a sumptuous dinner; and if mere authority were necessary to prove that, according to the Scotch proverb, slightly altered, "It's ill *fighting* between a fu' man and a fasting," I need only quote the well-known advice of that fine old veteran, whose high

principle and judicious practice shed a lustre upon the annals of the prize-ring, in the days when true British pluck and sterling British honesty regulated that institution—the undaunted and unconquerable Jackson :—“ You gentlemen,” the old champion would observe, with a grim smile, “ you gentlemen generally get into all your rows after dinner—the worst possible time, either for giving or taking punishment. You drink a fair share of wine after eating a large and indigestible meal ; and you come across some blackguard, with whom you enter into an altercation that is pretty sure to end in a fight. ‘ Well,’ you think, ‘ now is the time to find out whether the science that Jackson has taken such pains to teach me is of any use, or whether he is an old humbug after all !’ and you take your coat off, and get your hands up. Now, mark me ! the blackguard dined at one o’clock, and beyond half a pint of beer and a couple of whiffs from his pipe, he has had nothing since. The consequence is, he is empty and in good wind, as you soon discover, when after the first three rounds, he comes up fresh and handy, whilst you are hitting out all abroad, blown and confused. The enemy is two stone lighter than

yourself, and shorter in the arms ; and although his practice may have been greater, he has not had your advantage of scientific tuition ; and yet, much to your surprise, you are getting the worst of it. Shall I tell you what to do ? If you find you can't polish him off in one more round, there is a last resource—a manœuvre I have never yet known to fail, and which I strongly recommend you to put in practice immediately : *you give his friend a guinea to take him away !*”

Would that I could transfer to paper the inimitable humour with which the old hero used to come to the moral of his tale—a moral borne out in many a street-row and chance encounter, where the gentleman, with all his courage roused, and his chivalrous feelings excited by some unbearable piece of insolence or aggression on the part of an inferior, has found himself most provokingly worsted in his endeavours to inflict a well-merited punishment, by the very state of things old Jackson so graphically described ; or even should his superior pluck carry him through, and enable him to obtain a hard-won victory, it is mortifying to find that, although he may remain master of the field, and enjoy the empty glories of a

triumph, he has sustained a mauling which will compel him to keep his room for a fortnight, whilst his defeated antagonist, after a brief and unaccustomed ablution, and a "pull at the pump," is as fresh and well again as ever. I could certainly boast of no victory in my short and sharp skirmish with the unknown pugilist, outside the Trafalgar Hotel, at Greenwich ; but I felt for several days the effects of his quick, vigorous style of hitting ; nor would a pair of black eyes, and a somewhat swollen nasal organ, allow of my taking my accustomed rides and drives in the park, doing the attentive in morning calls upon my fair friends, or otherwise resuming my previous habits, and frequenting my usual haunts.

Besides these outward injuries and inglorious scars, I felt decided inward symptoms of having been living too fast, and should most assuredly have called in the professional assistance of my friend Doctor Dotterell, but for the feeling that I could not bear to lower my personal character for prowess in the eyes of that sporting little medico, by disclosing to him the marks of the encounter in which I had been so ignominiously worsted. I determined, therefore, to wait till my physiognomy had recovered its wonted

sleek appearance, before applying to the doctor for advice and prescription.

In the mean time, as I was again a prisoner to my chamber during the day, my lodgings became, as before, the resort of divers “fine young English gentlemen” of “the looser sort”—pupils and imitators of my friend Segundo, who, like their worthy preceptor, were good enough to consider my house and worldly goods their own, sharing amongst themselves, with a degree of social generosity to me quite incomprehensible, *my* horses, *my* carriages, *my* cigars, liqueurs, gloves, sticks, canes, umbrellas, and opera tickets, with other trifles of a like nature, generally supposed to be provided by a gentleman for his own individual comfort and delectation. Such scenes as the following were of constant occurrence :—Segundo, who was now living in a spare room of mine, originally intended to hold nothing cooler than a bath, but now devoted to the service of one whose *sang froid* Wenham Lake could not equal, is seated in *my* rocking-chair (the especial resort of its own master when he wishes to be thoroughly comfortable) ; *clad* in one of *my* dressing-gowns, and smoking a long cherry-stick pipe, which I have procured at his especial desire,

and keep continually supplied with the choicest and most fragrant tobacco for his use, with his feet on the breakfast-table, and his head in a Greek cap, quaintly embroidered for me in other days by the delicate fingers of Kate Cotherstone. With one of *my* shooting-jackets on his shoulders, and one of *my* large regalias between his lips, reclines Lord Loosefish—a young nobleman who does me the honour of bestowing on me a large portion of his spare time, and who finds himself less annoyed and importuned by duns at my lodgings than his own. Frank Racer, who does not smoke, is looking out at window with his hat on, and moistening the tooth-pick which he consumes so greedily with occasional applications to a large liqueur-bottle, rapidly waning under his attentions. Two other young gentlemen, both enveloped in fragrant clouds, and known respectively by the cognomens of “Nobs” and “The Bouncer,” are playing backgammon with much unnecessary vivacity, and enhancing the effects of that sufficiently noisy game by several highly reprehensible execrations, levelled at their alternate good or bad success, as the fickle goddess now showers her favours upon the triumphant “Nobs,” now smiles propitious

on the energetic "Bouncer." Need I specify that I love "a quiet morning!" and that neither my health nor my habits empower me to live thus constantly in the midst of noise and excitement?

"Can you let me have the cab to-day, Nogo?" says the silent Mr. Facer, and without waiting for an answer, rings the bell to order my vehicle at his own time, leaving me in uncertainty as to when he means to come back, or whether he will come back at all—the latter consummation being one to which, if I thought it likely to take place, I feel that I could sacrifice the horse, harness, cab-boy, and carriage, without a shadow of regret.

The servant comes in, and Segundo orders "the phaeton at three!" without so much as looking at its ostensible owner; whilst Loosefish drawls out—

"By the bye, Nogo, can you let me have a hack to-day? I want to ride down to Wimbledon in the course of the afternoon!"

And this series of arrangements having pretty well emptied my stable, Messrs. "Nobs" and "Bouncer," finding their choice of locomotion now remains between grinding their French boots upon the hot pavement, or char-

tering one of Her Majesty's Hansoms by the disbursement of Her Majesty's coin, kindly volunteer to stay and keep me company during the afternoon, adding, "We can finish our match at backgammon; and as these weeds are 'none so dusty,' I dare say we shall make it out very well till dinner-time, if Nogo will send for some beer!"

Such was a sample of one of my "mornings at home;" and had it not been that the approach of twilight enabled me to go out without fear of remark, I do believe these kind friends would have dined, and sat up with me during the greater portion of the night. Things, however, came to a crisis at last; and a dinner at the lodgings tenanted by Loosefish was the last of a series of Bacchanalian festivities at which I was able to attend. Although I have no doubt that this hereditary legislator—son and heir to the Earl of Dungeness, with whom he had quarrelled, and who, having nothing to leave, had thought it correct to go through the form of disinheriting his reprobate successor—although I have no doubt that from the many calls upon his purse, entailed by his rank and position, coupled with the inconvenient fact of his having nothing in possession, Loosefish was

more uncomfortably hard-up than any other of his impoverished companions, he was the only one of the set who seemed to think it necessary to repay my attentions and hospitality, morning receptions, and afternoon rides and drives, by an invitation to dinner. Such invitation he continually pressed me to accept; and at length, partly because I had no other engagement, partly because I was curious to see how the war was carried on by a young nobleman residing in London, without money and without credit, I promised to be with him and to partake of his hospitality at the orthodox hour of a quarter before eight. Segundo, of course, was to be one of the party; and at the appointed time I drove that worthy in my cab to No. —, Jermyn-street, the temporary residence and much-besieged citadel of the Right Honourable Viscount Loosefish.

As we rattled up to the door, I was somewhat disconcerted, though I cannot say surprised, to find that we had alighted in the midst of an energetic altercation, carried on between a fat, flabby individual, apparently a tradesman, accompanied by a less enterprising friend and presumed fellow-sufferer, who kept much in the background, and a respectable,

sedate-looking personage, who I concluded was the young nobleman's servant, and who was denying the fact of his master being visible, and dexterously inferring that he was "not at home," with a degree of consummate art that nothing but long practice could have enabled him to acquire.

"Not at home!" fumed the fat man, "not at home, ain't he? why I see a gentleman with my own eyes a-goin' up the stairs! It ain't no use a-leaving my account; nor I ain't a-goin' to be put upon, any longer. I must see his Lordship myself, I tell ye."

"Quite impossible, Mr. Thrimbles, I do assure you," replied the courteous and unmoved domestic; "to-morrow morning, after breakfast, Mr. Thrimbles. My Lord is always at home till three."

"Not a bit of it!" shouted the enraged Thrimbles. "Now's yer time, Meekes; come on! we'll see him ourselves, and give 'un a piece of our mind."

And whilst the well-drilled valet and factotum of the beleagured nobleman was ushering us into the tiny lobby that led to a narrow staircase, which he motioned us to ascend, the energetic Thrimbles and the valiant Meekes,

carrying the doorway by a *coup de main*, found themselves in possession of the body of the place. So ill-timed an interruption, so unexpected an addition to his dinner-party, would doubtless have been very disagreeable both to an entertainer and his guests; nor did I see any way of averting so inconvenient a rencontre as that which seemed now about to take place between the long-suffering tradesmen and their oft-reminded customer. But it was here that Segundo showed that rapid grasp of mind, that instantaneous decision of action, which Napoleon called "*coup-d'œil*". in his marshals, but which my less-assuming friend dignified with the humbler title of being "up to trap." Walking pompously into the hall, as if he had no connexion with myself, the last arrival—a deception assisted by the fact of his having stayed behind to give some orders to the cab-boy—and assuming a grave and imposing demeanour, considerably enhanced by the white neckcloth and suit of sable which were his constant evening wear, he addressed the astonished servant in a tone of mournful inquiry, the meaning of which I gave that quick-witted functionary the greatest credit for catching so instantaneously.

“I trust his Lordship has not suffered in health from this sudden and unexpected shock?” began Segundo, in a loud important voice, “and that so untimely a bereavement will not preclude him from entering upon a few matters of business imperative on the successor to such a fine estate as that of the late Earl?” he continued, drawing from his coat a huge pocket-book filled with papers and memoranda.

I saw the two invading tradesmen start and change colour, whilst Segundo followed up his advantage.

“Very sad thing, sir!” he said, turning to me as if he had never set eyes on me before; “yesterday, in the prime of life—only seized at six o’clock last evening—full habit—gout towards the head—Sir Joseph could do nothing for him—all over in three hours—in the midst of life, sir!—very fine property, and the young Earl succeeds to everything. Excuse me, sir, for detaining you: as the legal adviser of the family it is absolutely necessary that I should have five minutes’ private conversation with his Lordship.”

And with these words Segundo passed the irresolute Meekes and the astounded Thrimble

on the stairs ; and taking up a position on the landing-place above them, began to examine his papers with a most business-like air. I saw Meekes nudge Thrimbles, and I heard Thrimbles whisper to Meekes. At last the former, who had all along taken on himself the office of spokesman, began to stammer out his apologies to Segundo for being present at such a season of mourning, the only word that was intelligible being something about " his account."

" Your account, my good man !" said Segundo, taking his bill from him with an air of stately condescension, whilst he extended the other hand for a long paper document proffered by Meekes, " Your account had better be delivered to me, that it may be at once filed with the other claims against the estate. Regularity, I need hardly inform a tradesman—regularity, sir, is the soul of business ; and when other matters of greater importance have been settled, your trifling account (here poor Thrimbles winced, whilst the face of Meekes became several inches longer) shall receive proper attention. Good morning !"

And the door closed upon Messrs. Thrimbles and Meekes, hastening home under the

impression that they would not only obtain immediate payment for those claims which they had begun to consider hopeless, but would likewise enjoy the future custom and patronage of the Earl of Dungeness, in return for the liberality and credit which they had extended towards Lord Loosefish.

“Not badly done! was it, Nogo?” said the pseudo man-of-business, as we followed the now relieved domestic up the narrow staircase. “If I had had a little more notice, I could have seen my way better, and got a pony a-piece out of those two fellows, on account. Confound them! they would have been just as well pleased to lend their money to a fellow that was rolling in riches, as they are to send in their cursed bills to a poor devil like Loosefish, who they know can’t pay them. I wish I had got something out of them, the rascals! It would have served them right for their impudence, in coming so near dinner-time”

“A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind!” thought I, as I listened to Segundo’s philippic against these unfortunate tradesmen, who, however inopportune might be their visit, had, after all, only come to seek for what was really and justly their due. But much as I pitied

their coming disappointment, I could not refuse my tribute of admiration to the quick-witted auxiliary who had rid us of their inopportune presence—a feeling in which I am convinced I was joined by my Lord's sedate domestic ; who, however, was so well-drilled in his vocation, that albeit far more accustomed to those vigorous attacks than to such a rapid and unexpected rescue, he did not suffer his countenance to betray the slightest discomfiture or surprise, as he ushered us into the small but convenient apartment in which the banquet was about to be set forth. A low, but well-proportioned chamber, littered with prints, casts, sketches, and other works of curiosity or art, mingled with the usual quantity of miscellaneous articles that collect themselves insensibly in the domicile of every bachelor, was adorned by a round table, covered with a snowy cloth, and prepared to receive the eight guests who, including ourselves, were now lounging about the room. A large bouquet of flowers, fresh that morning from Covent Garden, adorned the centre of the board ; whilst around the pure alabaster vase which supported them, glittered a profusion of very curious and beautiful plate, soon destined, as our host volun-

teered to inform us, "to be cut up into half-crowns." Claret-decanter of quaint device and antique shape reared their fantastic forms on a sideboard; whilst at convenient distances on the table we were about to occupy, peeped forth the taper, graceful necks of the dark champagne-bottles, cooling luxuriously in that icy embrace which the broad Atlantic had been traversed to procure. Two dumb-waiters of elaborate carving and ingenious structure supplied the place of servants, none of whom, with the exception of my Lord's factotum, were permitted to enter the room; thereby combining, as Segundo remarked, the ease and piquancy of a pic-nic with the comfort and refinement of an elaborate *cuisine*. Jermyn-street, be it remembered, is not very far from certain clubs, whose cookery has been pronounced the nearest approach to perfection yet realized by *the science*, and it may be that such commodious vicinity might account for the very capital dinner which rapidly made its appearance, and of which the component parts, from turtle to "*caviere*," were blended with a skill and subtlety for which we gave Loosefish probably more credit than he deserved. The guests were varied and racy as the entertain-

ment: none of your stereotyped dandies ; none of your exalted and not very amusing personages who constitute what people facetiously call “good society,” and whose immovable dulness would assuredly render them respectable in *any sphere*. Loosefish could command as many of these as he chose when he was what schoolboys call “at home ;” which was probably the reason he studiously avoided all such correct companions, when able to select his own associates. What a curious thing this same “good society” is ! like a gilt cage hung up in the window, the birds that are out are dying to get in ; the birds that are in are dying to get out. Mr. Snobbes would give his ears to be asked to dine with the Duke of Ditchwater ! and who shall measure the amount of metaphorical dirt which Snobbes will consume, to arrive at that almost hopeless glorification ? But ask the Marquis of Mortmain the pleasantest day he spent last week. Was it the dreary dinner-party he was forced to attend with his ducal cousin at Ditchwater House ? Was it the prandial solemnity at which, as a privy councillor, he assisted in the halls of his Sovereign ? None of these was it, Mr. Snobbes—none of these ! but there was a

certain breakfast at Richmond—a certain dinner at Greenwich, to neither of which did rank or respectability offer an *entrée*, but of each of which the gay Marquis confided to his toady, who told his valet, who informed my hair-dresser, who related the fact to me, “that he never had enjoyed anything so much in the whole course of his life.” And in this there is a moral, Mr. Snobbes, if you could but see it: there is wholesome advice, if you would but take it. Not you! you will go on, year after year, season after season, wasting your time, impoverishing your substance, and destroying your spirits—and all to get amongst a set of people with whom you would find yourself not a bit more amused, and not one-half so comfortable, as you used to be when you were contented to enjoy the unassuming festivities of those of your own rank and condition in the world, when Burke was a sealed book, and the Queen’s drawing-room as inaccessible as Kamschatka; when you lunched with Dobbes, and dined with Figgins; nor found the venison one whit less fat, the champagne one particle worse iced, because partaken of in social good-fellowship with your

old chums and associates, Smith, Brown, Jones, and Robinson.

But in the meantime, the feast is progressing in Jermyn-street ; and as the wine disappears down thirsty throats, and mounts into reckless and mercurial brains, the various characters of the different *convives* came out, like the colours of some old picture when submitted to the revivifying touch of an artistic connoisseur. Most of them were in difficulties—all of them were in debt. There was young Graceless, of the Foot Guards, and Sabretache, of the Dragoons, each of whom might probably last another six months ; after which, the sales of their respective commissions would enable them to get abroad for an additional twelvemonth, and then there would be nothing left but their liabilities. No wonder they enjoyed the present with such gusto. Then there was our entertainer himself, who, having spent all he had at Newmarket and Crockford's, and borrowed all he could from the Jews, was now fain to support a precarious existence upon these very uncertain resources, and lived every day of his life as if there was no to-morrow. Next to him sat an actor,

whose convivial talents alone prevented his being one of the brightest ornaments of the British stage; and a painter, who might have vied with Apelles, could he have imparted to his canvas the brilliant colouring with which he adorned his anecdotes. Segundo had known this worthy intimately at Rome; and their joint recollections were more amusing than edifying. The former was the quietest of the party, it being an essential characteristic of the man to be always equally collected and calm, in the noisiest revelry as in the most painful vicissitudes of his chequered and exciting career. There was something about Segundo that nobody was able quite to make out; and he might have been soldier, sailor, courier, conspirator, or pirate, so intimately did he seem acquainted with all the more stirring scenes, all the darker phases of life on the continent. Our party was completed by a pale, haggard youth, whose handsome features appeared wasted with dissipation, and on whose brow, young as it was, care had too evidently imprinted her unsparing seal. Loosefish whispered to me that he was the "cleverest fellow of the lot;" and when I marked the occasional flash of brilliance that darted from

his hazel eye, I could easily believe that the spirit within was of the brightest and the keenest. He had been in the army; at the University; had studied for the bar; stood for a seat in Parliament; been married and divorced; and spent two fortunes—all before he was six-and-twenty. And there he was—a ruined man in credit and character, earning with his pen sufficient funds to take him to the gaming-table, where, as he played high and recklessly, he was occasionally an enormous winner; when he immediately entered upon his habitual course of dissipation, nor a line did he write till a run of bad luck or a continuance of revelry had again reduced him to the dread of actual starvation. But, apart from his moral worth—of which, perhaps, the less I say, the better—never was it my lot to cross my legs under the mahogany with so agreeable a companion. Fun, anecdote, jest, and repartee came ringing from his lips in an uninterrupted stream of merriment and good-humour. He could mimic, he could conjure, he could play on a knife, ventriloquize, sing—aye, and write his own songs, to boot; and I laughed till I cried, and my sides ached, at the quaint buffooneries and humorous fancies of

my melancholy-looking acquaintance. I wonder whether he was laughing at *me*! but I took a great fancy to this accomplished individual, and we struck up a firm alliance, long before the dessert made its appearance. He encouraged me to "punish Loosefish's champagne," as he called it; and the punishment, which I repeatedly administered, I soon found to produce its usual effects. The outlines of my various companions became slightly indistinct; their voices came sweetly, but unconnectedly, like the music of gushing waters, upon my ears; and I have a vague recollection of making myself extremely agreeable, and relating a curious anecdote, much applauded by my friend the dissipated author, of which I forgot the proper names at the commencement, and of which, hastening over such trifling omissions, and coming rather abruptly to the conclusion, I was dismayed to find that I had likewise forgotten the point. It must, however, have been a capital story in itself, if I may judge by the roars of laughter with which it was received by my auditors. The fun became gradually but surely faster and more furious; and I could perceive that our host's excellent wine was beginning to tell

upon all but the seasoned brain and firm organization of Segundo. "A song! a song!" was soon vociferated in every key; and Loosefish, looking round the table, quickly fixed his eye upon the young author, and called upon him for "a chant." The verses with which he replied to the invitation, and which were of his own composing, struck my fancy so much in my then vinous state, that I endeavoured to scribble them down in my betting-book, on a blank leaf, between a total of certain disbursements at Goodwood, and a combination of probable loss on the St. Leger; and, deciphering them with much difficulty the following morning, I found their Bacchanalian tendency to be as nearly as possible, the following:

A WORD FOR CHAMPAGNE.

I sigh not for woman, I court not her charms—

The long-waving tresses, the melting dark eye—

For the sting of the adder still lurks in her arms,

And falsehood is wafted with each burning sigh.

Such pleasure is poisoned, such ecstasy pain—

Forget her! remembrance shall fade in champagne!

For the bright-beaded bumper shall sparkle as well,

Though Cupid be cruel, and Venus be coy;

And the blood of the grape gushes up with a spell

That years shall not deaden, nor care shall alloy.

It thrills through the life-blood, it mounts to the brain—
Then crown the tall goblet once more with champagne !

The miser may gloat o'er his coffers of gold ;
The merchant may balance investment and sale ;
The land-holder swell with delight to behold
How his acres are yellowing far o'er the vale :
But mine be the riches that blush on that plain
Where the vintage of Sillery teems with champagne !

Rejoiced is the sage when his labours are crowned,
And the chaplets of laurel his temples adorn—
When the pure gems of science are scattered around
A name still undying to ages unborn ;
But benumbed are his senses, and weary his brain—
Let him quaff at the fountain which foams with champagne !

Ambition is noble, they tell ye—to sway
The fate of an empire, a nation to rule ;
To be flattered and worshipped, the god of a day,
And then learn to cringe in adversity's school.
But vexed is the spirit, the labour is vain ;
And the crest-fallen statesman flies back to champagne !

Then give me champagne ! and contentment be mine !
Women, wealth, and ambition—I cast them away.
My garlanded forehead let vine-leaves entwine !
And life shall to me be one long summer's day,
With the tears of the clustering grape for its rain,
And its sunshine—the bright golden floods of champagne !

“Bravo!” “Bravo!” “More champagne!” was the chorus to such appropriate sentiments; and more champagne, accordingly, poured forth its exhilarating floods—not the less intoxicating from the previous magnums of claret, and bottles of curious old sherry, that had found their way down our insatiable throats. I have but a vague recollection of the after-events of the night. It appears to me that scarcely two minutes had elapsed since the fresh supply of Sillery was called for, ere I found myself with Loosefish and Segundo, smoking a cigar, with my hat on. Was I in the street? or could it be Loosefish’s other room? I have a faint idea of an anchovy-toast, and a distinct recollection of a certain board of green cloth, a man with a rake, brandy and soda-water, a multiplicity of wax candles, and my anger with Segundo for not allowing me to play—suddenly converted into a superhuman effort to wind up my watch carefully, which failed! Twelve o’clock the following day brought back returning consciousness, accompanied with yellow looks and a beating brain, which, failing to recover in the usual twenty-four hours that obliterate the effects of a debauch, apprehensions of a bilious

fever soon brought Doctor Dotterell to my couch ; and the ominous shake of his sporting little head, as he felt my pulse and looked at my tongue, reduced me at once to a state of the most passive obedience.

“ This cannot go on, Mr. Nogo,” said the dapper little man : “ we must get you out of town, sir. Fine constitution sapped. Athletic frame reduced. Muscular energy enervated. Get you on your legs, Mr. Nogo, as soon as we can ; and then I must advise—I must beg, sir—nay, I must insist upon your leaving London, and recruiting your organization with quiet and country air !”

And the Doctor slapped his hat on his head, and stumped down-stairs with the self-sacrificing air of a medical Cato. Ill as I was, I got out of bed, and crawled to the window, to see him start the black pony, and round the corner, with squared elbows and careful coachmanship, that might have piloted Mr. Batty’s gilded chariot, with its team of twelve horses, all on end !

CHAPTER XIV.

“ The ancient Persians taught three useful things :
To ride—to draw the bow—to speak the truth !
Such was the mode of Cyrus—best of kings—
A mode adopted since by modern youth :
Bows have they—generally with two strings !
Horses they ride without remorse or ruth :
At speaking truth perhaps they’re not so clever ;
But draw the long-bow better now than ever ! ”
Don Juan .

“ — and taught his novice hand
To aim the forked bolt ; while he stood trembling,
Scared at the sound, and dazzled with its brightness.”
GRAY’S Agrippina.

LONDON in the season is doubtless a very delightful place ; and while the frame is vigorous, and the nerves unshaken, there is more enjoyment within the grasp of the votary of pleasure in the metropolis, than elsewhere. But let sorrow cast her shadow over the giddy trifler ;

let sickness poison the source of every gratification, which he has quaffed so eagerly ; or let “ *ennui* ”—the certain offspring of false excitement—cloud his satiated mind, and paralyze his enfeebled energies, lo ! a sudden change comes over him who erewhile seemed as if he could only exist in Pall-Mall, and, like a child flying back to its mother’s quiet smile, when surfeited with the caresses and indulgences of a birth-day, he betakes himself for rest and refreshment to the inexhaustible stores of rural Nature ; and weary, dejected, disgusted though he be, her legitimate amusements and invigorating pursuits soon renovate his flagging spirits and drooping frame—soon bring back the bloom of health to his cheek, the lustre of contentment to his eye.

So was it with me. After a season of gaiety and adventure sufficient to undermine the constitution of any man who was neither a philosopher nor a Hercules, I felt so completely “ done up ” with over-exertion and over-excitement, that Doctor Dotterell found little difficulty in persuading his alarmed patient to subscribe willingly to his fiat, delivered by the leech in his most oracular tone.

“ Country air, Mr. Nogo, is now the *sine*

quá non: tonics I have tried, and, as you must perceive, ineffectually. I have studied your constitution, Mr. Nogo, which is in many respects like my own. You require exercise: you require amusement—hem! and you are benefited by generous living (let me look at your tongue). You are, like myself, devoted to the sports of the field—not an uncommon taste among men of our organic vigour (the doctor weighed eight stone and a-half, and was weak in proportion), who are formed for the ruder and more perilous occupations of life—(allow me to feel your pulse)—and it is my opinion, sir—I speak it advisedly—that you must immediately leave town. Science has done her best for you: *I* have taken care of that; and we must now trust for a perfect cure to Nature—Nature, sir, without whom the whole pharmacopœia is but a fiddle without strings!”

I was much of the little doctor’s opinion as to the pharmacopœia—whatever that imposing word may signify—and lost no time in writing to my old friend and schoolfellow, “Joe Baggs,” as we called him at Eton—now the Rev. Josiah Bagshot, incumbent of Wilton Cowslips, in the diocese of Bath and Wells—

proposing that I should immediately pay him a long-promised visit at his quiet retreat in that most beautiful of all the beautiful localities adorning the west of England. It is needless to say that the *ci-devant* Etonian's acceptance of my offer was cordial, as his previous invitation had been hospitable; and if I thought Dotterell was right in ordering me out of town, whilst my lungs were still oppressed by the smoke-laden atmosphere of London, how much more was I convinced of his skill and judgment when I awoke to the delightful consciousness of restored health and returning spirits, in the pretty bedroom of my friend's snug parsonage, on the morning after my arrival! The stillness, the utter repose, so grateful after the turmoil and constant noise inseparable from the existence of streets, amounted to perfect luxury; and as I lay awake, whilst my well-drilled servant was putting out my things with the stealthiness of a midnight conspirator, and watched the sunbeams streaming through my closed window-shutters, I felt a lightness of heart—a boyish gaiety, to which I had been a stranger for months: and when I did prevail on myself to get out of bed, it was with a frolicsome bound,

such as had planted me on the floor of my tiny dormitory at Eton, in years long since gone by, when a whole-holiday rose—as in those days it seemed always to rise—in cloudless magnificence; or better still, when the golden sunlight, bathing in floods of beauty the College turrets and Mother Angelo's chesnuts, ushered in the long-looked for, heartily-welcomed, glorious Fourth of June! I am neither above nor below the weakness of being acted upon by such extraneous circumstances as fine weather and lovely scenery; and when I opened my window, and looked over my friend Joe's ornamental garden, his rich and leafy orchard, his sloping paddock, with its huge old trees, and its cows grazing as they only graze when the thermometer stands at 70 in the shade, to the unequalled view beyond, it was with a thrill of delight as keen, as delicious as could have been experienced by a Poussin or a Claude Lorraine. Hill and dale, wood and water, the neighbouring forest, and the distant hills, all that could constitute beauty, all that could delight the eye—there they were, heaped together in lavish magnificence: the golden stubbles studded with the shocks of late-reaped corn; the smiling meadows throwing out in

crisp relief those gigantic elms, that towered into the sunshine; the broad river glancing like a sheet of burnished silver; the sweeping masses of wood, black as midnight, in their depths, from the contrast of light and shade; and the distant horizon blending with the sky in that sunny haze, which to me always realizes the idea of Fairy-land. What a gorgeous panorama to feed the vision of contemplative man, whilst he was shaving! But Joe's voice, as he inspects his now-fading roses—for alas! ere the prime of summer mellows into autumn, the fairest flower is doomed to droop and die—Joe's full and manly voice admonishes me that tub and toilette must be proceeded with, for that “Breakfast will be ready in a quarter of an hour!” So whilst I am getting on with this necessary duty, and the clerical landholder walks as far as his orchard and his cows, let me devote a few lines to describing the person and position of my old schoolfellow and present host.

“Joe” then, as his friends still call him—or the Rev. Mr. Bagshot, as he is entitled by the rest of the world—is a man basking in that enviable period of life which the young anticipate as the completion of their prime, and the

old look back to as the flower of their youth. Joe Bagshot is thirty if he is a day: and a more comely and athletic specimen of the Anglo-Saxon race it would be difficult to find in a summer-day's journey. Five-feet-eleven in his stocking-soles; fourteen stone without offal—for severe exercise prevents the good-humoured parson from getting fat; with a rosy countenance, beaming with benevolence; a merry blue eye, and curling light-brown hair—it is no wonder that he is as great a favourite with the fair sex for his engaging appearance, as he is respected by the rougher portion of humanity for his bodily vigour and aptitude to all kinds of sports and exercises. Cricket, quoits, foot-ball, and wrestling—at these, the indigenous amusements of the country, he has not an equal in his parish. To walk a mile; to run a hundred yards; to leap, swim, or lift weights, he might be safely backed against most professionals; but many of these talents being decidedly unclerical, Joe is sedulous to conceal. For instance, although the best sparrer of his day at Cambridge, I recollect that the topic of self-defence being on one occasion brought forward at a numerous dinner-party which he attended, my friend was the

only person in the room that had not a word to say upon the subject; nor was it until the gloves were actually produced, and, *nolens volens*, Joe was compelled to put them on with the biggest man present, that it was discovered that the parson was the only practitioner of the lot to be depended on in a veritable set-to. How curious is it that so many of these athletic men, so many stalwart frames, gifted with extraordinary facility for all games and field-sports, and consequently imbued with a strong attachment to such pursuits, should have chosen the church for their profession! Who shall appreciate the sacrifice which, with scarcely an exception, they make, one and all, for conscience-sake, in giving up these their favourite pleasures, rather than furnish one censorious individual with occasion to say that there is aught in their conduct unbecoming a Christian minister? Joe could ride like a bird; but he gave up hunting the instant he discovered the slightest objection on the part of his parishioners; and in the kindred sports of fishing and shooting he only allowed himself such occasional relaxation as could not be construed by the most uncharitable into neglect of his professional duties. As a boy, at Eton,

“Joe Bags,” as we called him, always promised to be a sportsman. Besides his rowing and cricket-playing proficiency, he was celebrated for his partiality to such live stock as terriers, rabbits, ferrets, &c. ; in fact, he prided himself greatly on the performances of the latter pets, as to their efforts he owed much of his well-known fame in rat-hunting. His exploits as a shot were necessarily tainted with the misdemeanour of poaching ; and despite of watchers and gamekeepers, many a fat pheasant and savoury hare from the adjoining manors of Stoke and Thames Ditton—nay, occasionally from the august preserves of royalty itself—graced the stealthily-cooked breakfasts of the daring Etonian. Doubtless, had he been driven to it, he might have emulated the feat of a well-known sportsman since distinguished in the coverts of Norfolk, as over the plains of Leicestershire, who, when pursued by two royal keepers, and driven down to the flooded Thames, plunged boldly into the wintry torrent, and reached the opposite shore much exhausted truly, and considerably nearer Staines than his starting-point, but having swam the whole distance with the hare, for which he had risked so much, still in his

mouth!—a rare instance of pluck and determination in a boy, and to those who know what the Thames is, in November, opposite Datchet, an exploit seldom, if ever, surpassed. Joe was just the fellow to have accomplished this or any other dare-devil feat, although, like the *preux chevalier* of olden times, the “lamb among ladies, and lion among lances,” he was gentle and almost womanly in his love for gardening, music, sketching, and such softer pursuits; and I have often been amused to watch the brawny hand that could floor a bargeman, delicately manipulating the light and shade of a water-colour, tying up a carnation, setting a rose, or executing some complicated passage on the violin. But my toilette is ere this concluded, and descending the staircase I find Joe—who, it is needless to specify, is a bachelor—presiding over his comfortable breakfast-table, drawn close to the open French window, which connects us with the lawn, the roses, and the glorious sunshine “out-of-doors.”

“Another cup of tea, Joe, and a slice of that ham: I find the country-air works wonders upon a London appetite!”

But alas! everything must have a conclu-

sion, and breakfast cannot last for ever, though protracted by the luxurious concomitants of fresh fish, new-laid eggs, late strawberries, and Devonshire cream.

“One weed, Nogo?” said mine host, “a look at the garden; a run for the pointers; and we will settle our plans for the day. I cannot tell you how glad I was to get your letter, old fellow! to say you were coming here.”

And, lighting two huge regalias from a wax candle brought in for that purpose (it is only by attending to trifles such as these that real comfort can be obtained), we stepped out upon the smooth-shaven lawn; and as we walked up and down shady walks and trim parterres, now basking in the summer sunshine, now inhaling the perfume of roses, pinks, honeysuckles, and sweet-brier, we enjoyed to the utmost that greatest of all luxuries—the after-breakfast cigar. Two couple of rare pointers were released for our inspection; and as they gambolled here and there, and traversed the home-meadow, in wild enjoyment of their liberty, my friend proceeded to detail to me the series of amusements and gaieties which he had provided for my especial delight.

“There is an archery-meeting to-day at Castle Bowshot, and a cricket-match to-morrow at Ripley Down. Then we have the otter-hounds coming for a week’s hunting in the Slug; and a gathering of all the rank, beauty, and fashion of our county, for the Race meeting at Weatherley; besides which, I can give you some capital fishing, and, next week, undeniable partridge-shooting; and when we have nothing better to do—”

“Stop, my good fellow!” said I. “One at a time, and it will last the longer. Here have you provided a bill of fare that it will take at least a month to get through!”

“So much the better,” was the reply. “Now that we have got you down into the west, we don’t let you off again in a hurry, I promise you. But if you would like to patronize the archery-meeting, I’ll order the trap round *instantly*; for Castle Bowshot is a good eleven miles from here, and up or down-hill every yard of the way”

Accordingly, before I had time slightly to humanize my costume, and Joe had donned, as professionally bound, a stiff white cravat, over whose well-starched folds his whiskers clustered in unclerical profusion, the aforesaid

trap made its appearance at the door, and proved to be an exceedingly well-hung and neatly-painted dog-cart, drawn by a clever short-legged brown horse, with all the appearance of a capital heavy-weight hunter, as indeed, in my friend's hunting days, he had often proved himself, but whose trotting qualities I had yet to discover. The harness was plain and workmanlike, fitting, of course, to a nicety; and the whole thing had the unmistakable air of appertaining to a sportsman; whilst a white great-coat on the driving-seat, and the name of the "Rev. Josiah Bagshot, Wilton Cowslips," painted in letters an inch long on the back of the vehicle, proclaimed at once the ownership of the whole turn-out.

A glass of home-brewed ale, clear as amber, and I am afraid to say how strong, another cigar, and we are bowling merrily along, discoursing as we go, now of the pace and action of the brown horse, now of the ever-changing, ever-beautiful landscape through which we are passing, now of the disgraceful state of the road, whilst ever and anon we digress into conjecture as to the people we are about to meet, and the anticipated humours of the coming gathering.

“Mr. and Mrs. Shaftoe are what is called ‘people of the old school,’” said my cicerone, as he drew the lash gently across the brown horse’s quarters, and made the eleven miles in the hour an honest twelve—“that is to say, he rises at six, goes round his farm before breakfast, and drinks a bottle of port every day of his life after dinner; whilst she takes care of the poor, wears black mittens, and hopes ‘your room was comfortable’ when you come down in the morning. But they make their place very pleasant to stay at; and I assure you there are many worse billets in the west than Castle Bowshot. The old couple have no children of their own, but take forcible possession of all the young people in the neighbourhood, and are never so happy as when they are arranging a ball, a pic-nic, or a ‘breakfast’ for their favourites. The great let-off, however, is their autumn archery-meeting, which comprises all the other gaieties put together, and finishes with an out-of-doors dinner, and a dance. Only take care of your heart, Nogo! this is a dangerous place for a ‘soft one;’ and our west-country ladies are celebrated for their witchery—particularly the widows! I should say, now, Mrs. Montague Forbes was the

sort of woman to knock you over to a certainty?"

Ere I could inquire into the peculiar dangers likely to be encountered from an introduction to Mrs. Montague Forbes, we had arrived at the lodge-gates, which admitted us into a magnificent avenue of Spanish chesnuts, leading directly up to the castle. Long ere we reached its hospitable portal, we could discern, by the white tents which dotted the lawn, and the occasional strains of music wafted to our ears upon the summer air, that a *fête champêtre*, upon a large scale, was going on in the magnificent pleasure-grounds, filled with that motley and highly respectable assemblage which landed proprietors somewhat pompously designate as "the county people." As we drove up to the door, we were welcomed by Mr. Shaftoe in person—a venerable and fine-looking old man, erect as one of his own arrows, and bearing unmistakeable proofs of having been very handsome in his youth. He still stuck to powder and knee-breeches; but had it not been for this peculiarity, he might well have passed off for a younger man, by a dozen years at least, than the parish register avowed him to be.

“ Delighted to see you, Mr. Bagshot !” said the courtly old gentleman—“ delighted to see you, sir ! and your friend, Mr. Nogo—charmed to make your acquaintance, sir, and proud to welcome you to Castle Bowshot. You will find luncheon in the library ; after which, I hope to have the pleasure of presenting you to Mrs. Shaftoe and my guests.”

Declining the offer of refreshment, our only chance between such a breakfast as the Parsonage had furnished, and an early dinner, we proceeded forthwith to the scene of gaiety, presided over by Mrs. Shaftoe—a stately but good-humoured old lady, who received Bagshot with affectionate warmth, and myself with dignified courtesy. Leaving the former to make the agreeable to the several circles amongst which he appeared a prime favourite, I moved through the crowd, according to my custom, remarking, as I lounged about and contemplated the scene without interruption, on the manners and customs of the English in the nineteenth century, so facetiously set forth by the inimitable Mr. Punch.

How different from the practice of archery in the present day must have been the use of the long-bow, in what are jocosely called “ the

good old times," when every man who was not a thief appears to have been a thief-taker, and when security and comfort, as we understand the words, were unknown ; when

" Bold Robin Hood was a forester good,"

and kept the whole of the North Countrie alive, and the " Sheriff of Nottingham"—apparently a highly unpopular functionary—in a constant state of apprehension with his vagaries and eccentricities ; when his outlawed band of merry men—unlike the goodly " foresters of Arden," whose " wardmote" at the present day is a term synonymous with a gathering of all that is kindly and sociable—ranged the wilds of our midland counties, much in the predicament of the Bedouin Arab, " whose hand is against every man, and every man's hand against him !" This is not a climate nor a country to live all the year round

" Under the greenwood tree :"

witness the pic-nics every one of us can remember attending, even in the month of June ; and, despite of the " butt of malvoisie" and " pasty of the doe," despite of ancient saw

and time-renowned ballad, despite of antiquarian romance and black-letter enthusiasm—aye, despite of the glowing page of “Ivanhoe” itself—we cannot picture to ourselves the band of shivering spoilers—albeit clothed from top to toe in “Lincoln green”—other than a very woe-begone assemblage, when the second four-and-twenty hours of seasonable rain had rendered their leafy canopy like an alpaca umbrella, or a continuous shower-bath; and an easterly wind, as it shook the dripping branches, and crept coldly to his very marrow, had blanched the cheek of Will Scarlett, or, whistling through his limp and saturated garments, made even Little John himself look small.

But there are other and stirring recollections associated with the bow, besides these predatory exploits of the Middle Ages. We are taken insensibly back to the triumphant days of Cressy and Agincourt, when the “cloth-yard shaft,” with a stout English heart behind it, seems to have done yeoman’s service, and stemmed the foeman’s overwhelming charge, much in the same manner as the uncompromising bayonet of later date, when backed by the same sterling stuff. We glory with the

victorious archers, as their hissing volley, rattling like a hailstorm on their panoply, breaks the advancing chivalry of France; and the cheering war-cry, "St. George for merry England!" rings upon our ears whilst we behold the tossing fleur-de-lis borne backwards on the tide of defeat. Or we heave a sigh for the brave, the devoted, the gentle, and the loyal, who formed with their bodies a corpse-built bulwark around their dead sovereign on Flodden's field, where the gallant King of Scotland held his state as warlike monarch should when overcome by odds—stretched upon his shield, his face to heaven, and surrounded by his prostrate knights and nobles, overwhelmed, repulsed, defeated, but all unconquered still—a sacred rampart, immortalized by Aytoun in his soul-stirring lament:

“ Every stone a Scottish body,
Every step a corpse in mail;
And behind it lay our monarch,
Clenching still his shivered sword—
By his side Montrose and Athol,
At his feet a southern lord.”

Well may Scotland rue the grey-goose shaft that thinned her serried ranks, and laid her

stoutest warriors low—a man-at-arms for every missile. Perchance when we have dried the tear that falls for Flodden, we may moralize with good *Justice Shallow*, on the uncertainty of life and the Grim Archer, whose quarry sooner or later we must all of us become. “And is old Double dead? See! see! he drew a good bow—and dead! he shot a fine shoot—John of Gaunt loved him well, and betted much money on his head!” and yet this veteran toxopholite, though he could “clap”i the clout at fourscore, and carry you a forehand shaft, a fourteen and fourteen and a half,” must go the way of all flesh as surely as the prime buck he loved to strike in season. And then the train of my ideas having once arrived at Shakspeare, the mighty magician bears me off upon the wings of fancy to the golden days of Good Queen Bess, and the image of Falstaff; the reality of Sir Walter Raleigh, the progress to Coventry, and the pageantry at Kenilworth, drive from my mind all disagreeable ideas of archers, archery, war, flesh-wounds and slaughter, till unpleasantly reminded by my precarious position that I am still a denizen of this present world, though not likely to continue so, if I persevere in such close proximity to the

target as my day-dream has lured me to, unperceived—Whiz! an arrow sticks six inches into the ground within finger's length of my patent leather boot. Whiz! comes another in its erratic course, threatening me with the possibility of the Red King's fate, and shaving my white hat so closely as to give me a very clear notion of the sensations entertained by that pomiferous youth who, as heir of entail to the celebrated Swiss sportsman, William Tell, so manfully stood up to the paternal shot. A ringing laugh from the lips of the fair Diana, who has well-nigh sacrificed an unwary stranger, brings me completely to myself; and as Bag-shot rushes forward, and, drawing me out of the line of fire, presents me to the dangerous charmer, I return a few unmeaning compliments, which will not bear repeating, to the apologies poured forth by Mrs. Montague Forbes—for Mrs. Montague Forbes it is—who so nearly “hit the white,” though not exactly in the manner described by the old chroniclers of archery. As their practice never approaches a much greater degree of accuracy than what may be termed “the roving range,” I presume it is the extremely picturesque and becoming dress assumed by its votaries that

makes this such a favourite exercise with the fair sex. Certainly Mrs. Montague Forbes was got-up to admiration! and her fine rounded figure, large blue eyes, and waving golden locks, were set off to great advantage by the close green tunic, and Spanish hat and feathers, which seemed to be the uniform of the competitors for the silver arrow. I have reason to know the lady in question was at that time turned of forty; but whatever attractions she might have lost by the unavoidable fading of youthful bloom, were fully made up by that experience with which a woman of a certain age prepares with deeper craft, as she exhibits with greater skill, the restorative auxiliaries of the toilette. Really, on that bright sunny lawn, with its fine old oaks, and its distant view, its crowds of well-dressed people, bevvies of lovely girls, and groups of handsome matrons—with all to attract and fascinate the eye—there was no object present, animate or inanimate, that received a greater share of spontaneous attention than did the much-admired widow, Mrs. Montague Forbes. Thanks to the good character with which it appears Bagshot had already furnished his friend, I soon found myself in high favour with the lively widow, who

did not disdain, when the contest for the great prize had terminated in her triumph, to instruct me with her own fair hands in the use of the *lethal* weapon.

After she had received the compliments and congratulations of the party, earned by her comparative superiority over her fair competitors, with whom the attitude appeared the great point, the further direction of the shaft being a matter of secondary importance; and after a burst of triumphal music, celebrating the victory with an air compounded of "See the conqu'ring hero!" and the prophetic intimation that "This day a stag must die!" the most ambitious professors of archery amongst the gentlemen proceeded to compete for *their* prize—an old illuminated volume, treating of all the mysteries connected with The Bow; whilst the uninitiated, thronging round two other targets placed within easy distance, disported themselves with what may be not unjustly termed *discursive* shooting. Amongst these humbler individuals I now took my place, to be instructed by Mrs. Montague Forbes in the *arcana* of the craft; and though sorely distracted by the manifold charms of my monitress—charms that the different posi-

tions in which she herself placed me, gave me full opportunities of appreciating—I made very fair progress for a first lesson, actually hitting the outer rim of the target no less than twice, and once narrowly escaping the fate of the “struck eagle,” who winged the shaft that quivered in his heart, by transfixing my plaid trousers, and grazing the cuticle of my thigh, in an ill-advised attempt to combine accuracy of aim with an easy and graceful deportment. Little did I dream that a dart was even then working its silent way to my heart—there to inflict an insidious wound, to which torn “continuations” and an excoriated surface were indeed a joke!

Shooting, flirting, laughing, and talking, went on by turns, till the afternoon sun, throwing the long shadows of the giant elms across the lawn, warned us that dinner-time was approaching; and need I say that Mrs. Montague Forbes did me the honour of accepting my arm to conduct her to the tent, where we were to rough it, as best we might, on white soup, cold chickens, lobster-salad, and iced champagne, not forgetting strawberries and cream? Of all auxiliaries to flirtation, commend me to that sort of impromptu dinner-arrangements,

comprising the piquancy and ease of a picnic, with the luxuries and comforts of a well-regulated establishment. You have the fresh green turf under your feet ; but in case of rain, which spoils hot dishes, you have a good canvass covering over your head : you need not sit with your feet in a puddle ; and a cane-bottomed chair is a pleasanter resting-place than a piece of spongy moss on a three-cornered block of stone. The port-wine has not flooded the salad, nor has anyone spilt the salt and forgotten the corkscrew : so you have nothing to do but to eat, drink, and make yourself agreeable.

“ Another wing, Mrs. Forbes, after your exertions with the bow ? Let me give you a little more champagne ? and won’t you *venture* on another slice of tongue ? ”

Diana works away like a good one, repaying my assiduities with a shower of smiles. We are getting on very comfortably, and the tongues of the guests becoming momentarily more loosened—the men pledging each other with increasing cordiality, and pretty faces waxing a trifle flushed—entirely in consequence of having been all day in the open air, of course !

Just as we are at the merriest, the clatter of knife-handles against the table produces a general silence, only broken by the voices of one or two prozers, who are somewhat slow in finishing their sentences—good line-hunters, as we say of hounds, and not to be done out of their share of the sport.

Mr. Shaftoe rises, and, backed up by continuous applause, proposes the health of the “fair toxophilite who has that day carried off the silver arrow!” coupling with it the name of the successful male archer, who is consequently nailed for a speech in reply.

Mrs. Forbes smiles and blushes, apparently having both these weapons quite at command; whilst after a vast deal of hesitation and delay, Mr. Quivering rises to return thanks, in a state of extreme confusion. I am convinced that if he—a first-class man at Oxford—had only known what was expected of him, he would have shot in any direction rather than at the target on that fatal day. However, there is no escape, and up he gets: “Honour—happiness—distinguished party—hospitable landlord—fair archers—surrounded by a galaxy of beauty (great applause)—healthy recreation, and graceful pursuit!” Here the orator warms with his

subject, and involves himself in a complicated treatise on the antiquity of the bow ; the training of Cyrus ; the Parthians' flying warfare—with an attempted quotation from Horace, coughed down *instantly* by the ladies ; the weapon of Apollo ; the delight of the spotless Diana ; and the retreat of the " Ten Thousand"—where he suddenly recollects himself, and abruptly breaks off, with a general good health, and a bumper of champagne, when he sits down, blushing hugely, amidst the congratulations of his friends, and sundry exclamations of " Bravo, Quivering !" " fine scholar !" " deep research !" " modest delivery !" " capital speech !"

An over-dressed young man, evidently a swell in these parts, now rises, and in general terms proposes the health of the ladies, on which those charmers take their departure, and diving like a retriever under the table-cloth, I bring up and present to Mrs. Montague Forbes in rapid succession a laced pocket-handkerchief, a pair of white kid gloves, a small *bouquet*, a clasp bracelet, and a French fan—all which articles I presume must have been lost but for my exertions.

We drink a little more wine, and Bagshot

introduces me to sundry "capital fellows," by all of whom I am most graciously received. Just as we are beginning to think of the charms of a cigar on such an evening, we are summoned to the ball-room, there to meet the ladies again, who have taken advantage of the mysterious *interim* to "do up" their hair, exchange confidential secrets with their particular friends, and have a little tea. Judging from the welcome smile with which she greeted me, I should say Mrs. Montague Forbes was not a favourite with ladies; and I have often remarked that the good opinion entertained of a woman by her own sex is generally in an inverse ratio to her popularity with ours. Be that as it may, to my mind she was infinitely the most agreeable person in the room; and after a night of music, waltzing, flirting, and philandering, such as I have seldom encountered, the early streaks of dawn greeted our aching eyes, as Joe and I climbed into the dog-cart for our homeward journey; and the pretty parsonage was smiling in the full light of a glorious summer sun, ere we sought our respective couches, cordially agreeing that we had spent a delightful day. What may have

been the nature of my friend's visions, I am at a loss to state ; but I can safely aver, with all regard to truth, that I dreamt that morning of Mrs. Montague Forbes !

CHAPTER XV.

“ The evaporation of a joyous day
Is like the last glass of champagne, without
The foam which made its virgin bumper gay ;
Or like a system, coupled with a doubt ;
Or like a soda-bottle, when its spray
Has sparkled, and let half its spirit out ;
Or like a billow, left by storms behind,
Without the animation of the wind.”

Don Juan.

“ Oh, monstrous !—eleven buckram men.”

K. Henry IV.

MONSTROUS indeed. It might be difficult in the days of chivalry to recognise one's dearest friend, when, like a lobster in its shell, he appeared armed *cap-à-pie* for the encounter. But what shall we say of eleven stout elderly gentlemen, lapped in leather and swathed in

cork, their natural rotundity increased tenfold by their voluminous defences, and their jolly faces crimsoned from the effects of such a costume, under a midsummer sun; but one and all gallantly bent upon achieving "a score," in defiance of the present terrific system of round bowling, which places cricket on a par with the tilts and tournaments of the middle ages? Such was the array that greeted my eyes, on our arrival at Ripley Down, the day after the Castle Bowshot Archery Meeting; a day ushered in with such tropical sunshine as England can rarely boast, and to be made memorable by a contest for supremacy between the Ripley eleven and twenty-two of the surrounding district; the whole thirty-three comprising, I verily believe, every cricket-player within fifty miles. Need I say that Bagshot, the pride of the "Upper Shooting Fields," in his Eton days, was the very Achilles of the Ripley champions? or that his eagerness to be in time for the fray deprived me of sundry hours of necessary repose, and forced me to dispose of my breakfast in that uncomfortable manner which we condemn in the equine species under the term "bolting their food"? It seemed as if I had only just left the brown

horse and the dog-cart, when I found myself again "taking the road" in that locomotive vehicle, my jaded spirits and London pallor contrasting most unfavourably with Joe's rosy face and jovial tones, as he descanted upon the anticipated triumphs to be won by bat and ball. Why is it that to some, and those too often the very temperaments most susceptible of its enjoyments, the exhilaration of a gala-day should be invariably followed by a corresponding depression of spirits and incapacity for exertion? Is my frame weaker, or are my nerves more susceptible than my neighbours, that I should never fail to be the victim of this distressing reaction? I know not. But here I was, as usual, dull and weary in proportion to my yesterday's enjoyment; whilst Bagshot, who had drunk infinitely more champagne, and smoked twice as many cigars on his way home, looked fresh and rosy as a child—not a line in his beaming, good-humoured countenance, not a shade on his frank, open brow. I could not help complimenting him on his superiority of organization, when I found that, like all people who live entirely in the country, he had formed a most exaggerated idea of London dissipation; and actually looked up to me as a man of iron

frame, for sustaining as I did the pleasures of a fashionable life.

“Very few men could stand it as you do,” said the unsophisticated parson. “I have heard of you, Nogo—dancing, and sitting up, and Crockford’s, and all that: it would kill me in a fortnight,” added the clerical Hercules: “and I am only too thankful that my lot is cast in this quiet nook of the country, where I can enjoy the out-of-door life that I am so fond of, and have no temptation to late hours and smart company.”

And thus we chatted on, beguiling the way with remarks on our previous day’s amusement, and the different West-country notabilities whose acquaintance I had made; nor did Mrs. Montague Forbes obtain less than her due share of our attention, Bagshot declaring her to be “a very charming person, and just in the prime of life;” to which I gave a tacit assent, not the less cordial for its confinement to my own bosom.

But a long steep hill, which must have been interminable had the brown horse been less well-bred, brings us at last to the “Down,” where a large tent, surrounded by rows of benches, and sundry spectral figures flitting

about in white flannel, announce that the cricket-match is about to be holden. Already have several vehicles deposited their alluring loads; and pretty faces, peeping from under pink, blue, and white parasols, lavish glances of welcome on Joe, and curiosity on his companion. Here and there a gracious damsel, recognising the partner of last night, bestows a nod that seems to court further acquaintance; and it is evident to me that Mr. Tilbury Nogo is not half the man in Kensington Gardens or the Park that he promises to be on Ripley Down.

The eleven, or rather *nine* of them, gather round Joe, as he descends from his dog-cart; while the confusion of tongues and elongation of faces proclaim that some dire catastrophe has taken place, and that, in the oratorical words of Mr. Quivering, whom I recognize with difficulty in his panoply, "this will prove a disastrous day for Ripley." I whisper an inquiry to a short-legged gentleman—in flannel, of course, with a red silk handkerchief bound round his head, whose name I afterwards discovered to be Swaddles—and the truth bursts upon me volubly.

"Trimmer is absent! Trimmer has written

to say he can't come! Trimmer has been tampered with by the twenty-two! It's disgraceful!—it's too bad!—it's beyond a joke! The only man who can stop Trundle's bowling. The only bat in England that really knows how to 'hit to the leg.' It's absurd to say his wife is taken ill. (Mrs. Trimmer has already had twelve children, and this is her thirteenth confinement.) He might have gone back after the match; it's only nineteen miles across country. He's used us shamefully. Never forget it!"

And the tide of indignation sets in violently against the uxorious absentee; Mr. Swaddles, in particular, becoming ludicrously excited.

"We must make up our number," says the latter gentleman, apparently much inclined to quarrel with somebody; "how is it to be done? I ask you, how is it to be done?"

And he glances fiercely round on the devoted band, whose blank visages promise no solution of the inquiry. At length, taking Bagshot aside, he enters into a whispered conference, in which such expressions as these force themselves upon my startled ear:—"He used to play, when at Eton." "Hunting man, did you say? Of course he can bat." "Good

shot, I dare say ; don't doubt he can bowl. Light, active figure—sure to be able to run.” And the pleasant conviction obtrudes itself on my mind that I am about to be selected as a further victim to the terrific bowling of the insatiate Trundle. Sure enough Mr. Swaddles, who has constituted himself a dictator in the present crisis, marches up to me with short, determined strides, and informs me, as if I had no voice at all in the matter, that they have “ chosen me into their eleven, and they have no doubt I shall prove a most efficient aid, and worth a dozen of the degraded Trimmer ; who,” adds Mr. Swaddles, with a parting growl at the deserter, “ ought never to have been elected a member of the club at all.”

Vanity ! ambition ! the defect of the bravest, the infirmity of the noblest ; much have ye to answer for. From the submersion of a Narcissus to the Moscow of a Napoleon—still, sister-failings ! have ye lured mankind to their downfall ; and now would nothing satisfy either or both of you but to lead the unfortunate Tilbury Nogo a willing victim to your delusive altar ? Weary, jaded, and unwell, I was in the very worst possible condition for the manly game I was about to join : added to

which, I cannot conceal from myself that I am of a nervous temperament ; and such, I need not say, is the organization least adapted to encounter "round bowling." Besides, I had not touched a bat since I left Eton : and yet, despite of all these drawbacks and deficiencies, I could not resist the temptation of appearing before that crowded assemblage as one of the heroes of the day. Bright eyes were to look approval of my deeds, fair hands would lend their gentle plaudits to a successful "swipe" or a scientific "block ;" and casting all personal terror to the winds, I took my place amongst the staunch supporters, destined to uphold the cricketing fame of Ripley.

In this unjust and unsatisfactory world, I have often thought that the amount of glory which we obtain is most unfairly disproportioned to the mental suffering we undergo in its acquisition. Bodily peril is to one man a decidedly agreeable sensation, whilst in another it produces a degree of what schoolboys denominate "funk," which amounts to positive agony. Leonidas and his Spartans, looking forward to a hot supper with Pluto—"the three who kept the bridge so well, in the brave days of old," opposed to the swelling

masses of the Tuscan army—Cœur de Lion in the desert—or the Hero of Hougoumont at Waterloo—were doubtless, one and all, men of that glorious organization which woos danger as its bride, and kindles like a chafing war-horse at the clash of steel ; but we cannot allow such spirits as these the credit claimed as due to his personal valour, by a well-known character at Quatre-Bras, who, comparing his own coolness with that of the men under his command, when their apparent insensibility to danger called forth the admiring encomiums of a brother-officer, argued that he alone deserved praise for his gallantry, “because,” said he, “those fellows don’t care how much they are peppered ; whilst *I* stay here, although *I am most devilishly afraid!*”

In the same way, to compare small things with great, it was all very well for men like my friend Bagshot, of Herculean mould and corresponding activity, skilled besides in all the stratagems of the game, to jest and laugh at balls delivered with catapultic energy, or skimming the sward about the height of your knees with a velocity that threatened to take a leg clean off without the ceremony of amputation. By the way, I can only account for the excel-

lent fight the wooden-legged pensioners at Greenwich make annually against their one-armed antagonists by their utter disregard, during the existing low price of timber, for such vicious "shooters" as these. But though Bagshot, Quivering (for, to give him his due, like most hard-reading men, he was a first-rate cricketer), and one or two others, might look upon all this as sport, it really threatened to be death to me; and I claim accordingly my due share of applause for thus boldly standing in the gap occasioned by the non-appearance of the much-abused Mr. Trimmer. I think Swaddles was not very comfortable, but he carried off his feelings with a nervous fuss and swagger which effectually concealed any unmanly apprehensions lurking at his heart; nor did the extreme caution which he manifested during the after-progress of the game warrant his entertaining any great degree of alarm for his personal safety. But in the meantime the moment for opening the lists is rapidly approaching. Already has the ceremony of "pitching the wickets" been gone through. Fortune has decided by the augury of a tossing half-crown that Ripley shall go in first; and as Bagshot, the champion of its eleven, places

himself in an attitude of defence at his wicket, and "takes guard" from his opposite colleague, the redoubtable Trundle bares his nervous arm, and spinning the ball playfully betwixt finger and thumb, scans with wary eye, that takes all in at a glance, the stalwart batsman, the "inner stump," on which he meditates his attack, and the intervening sward, true and level as the surface of a billiard-table. The twenty-two hover round with a vigilance that would appear to leave no loop-hole for a single score. The umpires are placed like the seconds in a duel, where the peril they undergo may impress upon their minds the responsibility of their situation. The gentleman who "keeps the score" takes up a position in the tent, out of the line of fire, and where he can command the beer, and is liberally supplied with black-lead pencils, one of which he wears continually in his mouth. Everything is in readiness, and the hush of expectation, broken only by the silver tones of Mrs. Montague Forbes, pervades the assembly. Like the chivalric "*laissez aller*," from the mailed marshal of the lists, that set hearts beating and eyes straining in the olden time, the word "Play!" enunciated in tones hoarse with emotion from the lips of

the umpire, rouses the players into simultaneous action, and places the spectators on the tiptoe of expectation. Every scout is on the alert, and the fielding promises to be excellent. My friend Joe stretches his athletic frame over his bat, as he crouches to the ground like a tiger about to spring, then rising suddenly erect, poises the polished weapon towards his antagonist, ere he resumes his attitude of calm and self-possessed defiance; the wicket-keeper behind him, gloved to the elbow and padded to the waist, stooping towards the stumps, and watching, all eye, the motions of the bowler, seems to anticipate the triumph of his vigilance and activity. Trundle creeps back a few paces, starts suddenly forward with a lightning-like sweep of his long sinewy arm, and ere the baffled sight can follow his spinning missile, a dull, heavy sound, and Joe's collected attitude—fit study for a sculptor—announce that the well-directed ball, speeding straight and true to the bail of the "leg stump," has been quickly and scientifically stopped. The first "over" causes a general change of places amongst the field; nor has the scorer yet had cause to dull the point of his extremely well-cut pencil; and it is now Quivering's turn to

stand up to the reckless bowling of a brawny blacksmith, celebrated for the rapidity rather than the accuracy with which he delivers his ball. Two "byes" and one "wide ball" remind the first-class man of his merry school-days, and with increasing confidence he makes a brilliant hit "to the leg," and "goes for a three." The fielders run, and holloa: "Now! now!" resounds over the plain; the lookers-on applaud; the scorer refreshes himself with a pull at the beer, which is his way of rendering homage to an illustrious feat; and the discomfited blacksmith, shaking his head, prepares an astounding "shooter" for Bagshot, who is this time opposed to him. Straight and rapid comes the ball, rising at that inconvenient distance which tempts an inconsiderate "swipe," withheld ere delivered by the doubting batman, who is then too late to "block," and finds his bails scattered, and himself sacrificed by his own indecision. Not so my friend Joe: stepping boldly out, he met the deceiving globe when just upon the rise, and lending the full swing of his brawny shoulders to the stroke, far above the astonished heads of the open-mouthed fielders—far beyond the remotest "fag," placed upon the outskirts as an especial

compliment to his prowess—cleaving the blue heaven, and bounding over the emerald sward—he sent it for a “sixer,” even into the very tent where the fairer portion of our company had gathered, in gorgeous assembly, for shelter from the noonday sun. Amidst the shaking of petticoats by their laughing owners, as if to assure themselves and the breathless scout who rushes headlong into their presence that they have not involuntarily secreted the indispensable article, amidst peals of mirth and shouts of applause from the delighted multitude, amidst uproarious congratulations from the side that is “in,” and frantic recrimination from the side that is “out,” the cry of “Lost ball!” ratifies the six that have been already run, at the same moment that the missing treasure is discovered, snugly ensconced in the folds of Mr. Swaddle’s brown frock-coat, incautiously laid aside in the back of the tent; and to reach which hiding-place it had broken two ginger-beer bottles, and gone through the best part of a raised pie in its tumultuous career. But triumphs such as these fall to the lot of mortals only in sparing numbers, few and far between; nor was Bagshot totally invincible, any more than Achilles. Although

he saw Quivering out, and after him witnessed the defeat and discomfiture of no less than four of his colleagues, his own downfall was rapidly approaching. Flushed with the success of a score now counted by decimals—intoxicated by the lavish applause of the ladies, no less than the thrilling excitement of the game, my friend began to play on a wild though brilliant system, and, after sundry effective and extraordinary hits, was at length “caught out,” in an ambitious effort at immortality, by a youth of sixteen, the very humblest of the twenty-two, then making his first appearance in public as a match-player, but whose success on this occasion stamped him a cricketer for life.

The score by this time looks well, and the beer is waning rapidly, but we have already got through most of our good men; and although I have kept modestly in the background, there is a murmur of “Mr. Nogo!”—“Mr. Nogo!”—“Where is Mr. Nogo?”—that summons me to the breach: I shall have to encounter the blacksmith, who has just disposed of my predecessor with a crashing ball that has shivered his outer stump into a dozen pieces; and whilst a fresh wicket is being put up wherewith to glut this athletic savage, I

arm myself for the fray. Invulnerable leggings, tied by a multiplicity of white strings ! defend my lower extremities, whilst I plunge my trembling hands into leather gloves, the damp and clammy interior of which convinces me that I am not the only person whose courage, like that of Bob Acres, has oozed out at the palms of his hands, notwithstanding the confidence supposed to be inspired by knuckle-preservers of tough India-rubber. Thus accoutred, I walk up to my post, and my diseased fancy metamorphoses the good-humoured smile on the bowler's countenance into a glare of demoniacal triumph at his victim. Absurd as it is, I feel confoundedly nervous ; and none the less so for the consciousness that Mrs. Montague Forbes is looking on. The blacksmith measures me with his eye, and I feel that the dreadful moment has arrived. " Play ! " a dark object comes whizzing towards me, apparently in a direct line for my head. Involuntarily I shut my eyes, and with an energy borrowed from despair scoop wildly with my bat somewhere in the direction of the wicket-keeper. I have yet to learn how I escaped decapitation ; but, on recovering my senses, I found my wicket was still untouched, and a

welcome "over" gave me a little breathing-time, and an opportunity of observing the demeanour of my colleague under similar trying circumstances. He is a round-about little man, of some fifty or sixty summers, with short, sturdy legs, and a bald head, glistening like polished ivory in the sun. He stands gallantly up to his bat as if nothing could ever knock him down; and, though time and good living may have told somewhat upon the flexibility of his muscles, he is evidently a master of the craft. Right and left he "swipes out" over the plain, and gives the fielders little time to fall asleep. Then to see him run! his honest face crimson with excitement, his stout thick arms tossing wildly about his person, and his spherical proportions impelled forwards upon those short, twinkling legs as though by some supernatural agency, he reminded me of the lines applied to a corpulent sportsman devoted to the chase, once right-well known in "the shires"—

"For beef on the rib no Leicestershire bullock was
rounder;

A wonderful weight at a wonderful rate—he flew
like a sixty-four pounder."

Gathering confidence from the prowess of this

modern Daniel Lambert, I, too, endeavour to keep my eyes open ; and, thanks to my favouring stars, actually succeed in obtaining a run. Great applause from the spectators, and a white handkerchief waves from within the tent that can belong to no other than Mrs. Montague Forbes. The blood of the Nogos swells in my veins, and again I nerve myself to do or die. The blacksmith looks wicked, and delivers a straight one. I dash boldly at it, and, striking wildly over the revolving object, am sensible of an electric shock just below the knee-pan, at the same moment that my bails fly upwards ; and, despite of bodily pain and mental agitation, I am disagreeably conscious of being "bowled out." Probably no man has ever yet succeeded in the often-attempted feat of walking away from his wickets, under defeat, with an unconcerned air. It is amusing to observe the different conduct of different individuals during this trying ordeal, and to remark upon countenances of every hue, and features of all shapes, the selfsame constrained and ghastly smile vainly assumed to conceal intense mortification. Although writhing with pain (for a cricket-ball meeting an angular portion of the human frame at the rate of forty

miles an hour is by no means a pleasurable sensation to the subject), the annoyance of failure in the presence of so many spectators, and the plaudits which greeted my downfall like every other event in the game, were infinitely more disagreeable than the actual infliction of corporeal agony. "Keen were my pangs, but keener far to feel" that Mrs. Montague Forbes should be looking on with her laughing blue eyes and her saucy smile, doubtless recognizing in the clumsy cricketer that unsuccessful marksman whom yesterday she had taken such pains to instruct in the use of the bow.

Ere I could limp up to the tent to receive with feigned good humour the ironical compliments of my disheartened colleagues upon my modest score of "one," only surpassed by that of the irascible Swaddles, "whose timbers," to use the language of the *Ripley Watchman and Cricketers' Chronicle*, "were scattered to the tune of a round o," I discovered that the increasing pain in my leg would render my further assistance, in the way of fielding and second innings, totally unavailable to the contending eleven; and that I should be compelled, for that day at least, to remain an

inactive spectator of the manly sports, which, truth to tell, I had no longer any strong inclination to join. My new acquaintances were full of sympathy and assistance ; arms were proffered to assist me to a resting-place, cushions procured on which to stretch my wounded limb, and declarations rife on all sides that I “ had played very pluckily, and although evidently out of practice, should have been a most valuable auxiliary in another innings.” But the last of the Ripley eleven has been now disposed of, and the ball is triumphantly ascending from each of the twenty-two in turn, who are as eager to touch its brown surface as though some mystic virtue lay hidden in that worn and tightly-stitched leather. The devoted band, now reduced to ten, prepare for the arduous duties of fielding. Swaddles votes for going to lunch ; but the idea is scouted by his eager comrades, and the proposer infinitely disgusted by being placed at a point technically called “ long leg,” and which will probably entail on his short legs an infinity of violent exercise. This arrangement is consequent upon my defalcation, and the victim scowls angrily upon my mutilated form as he struts sulkily off to the post assigned him, leaving me, like

another Ivanhoe, to be tended by a fair "sympathizer," who varies her exclamations and remarks upon the strife without by expressions of concern and pity for the sufferer within.

"Oh woman! in our hours of ease
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please;
When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou."

says the bard, and so say I; at least, so I said cordially on that sunny afternoon, as reclining at ease in the shady quiet tent, waited on by fair and gentle hands, soothed by the sympathy of sweet Mrs. Montague Forbes (whose first husband, the late Mr. F., had been a sad invalid), I learned from the energetic conversation going on around me how the contest went, and, without even the trouble of looking, was made aware of the changes and vicissitudes of this all-important match. To complete her entire subjugation of my indolent nature, the artful widow herself proposed that I should light a cigar—"they all liked the smell *so* much in the open air;" and Mrs. Montague herself had once smoked "a whiff at one of her brother's, and it did not make her the

least ill !” So I lay back upon my couch ; and as I watched the fumes of my fragrant regalia wreathing into the summer air, I realized to myself the advantage of the position enjoyed by the Grand Turk, who, I have been given to understand, spends the greater part of his existence in the charming society of his wives, varied only by the equally intellectual pleasures of his hookah.

But the match goes on, and the fair spectators, generally in superlatives, exclaim upon its incidents and events.

“ Gracious !” says one, clasping her hands, “ that duck, Swaddles, has caught the blacksmith out ! How charming ! How delightful ! How heavenly ! I’m so glad ! Fanny, an’t you ?”

“ How beautifully Mr. Quivering bowls,” is the response of that artless damsel, who is supposed to entertain a lurking predilection for the attenuated scholar. “ I’m sure Ripley *must* win ; and think of their only having ten against the others’ twenty-two. So noble, isn’t it ?”

“ Let me put this cushion a little more under your shoulder, Mr. Nogo,” says my enchantress, with a smile that makes me forget

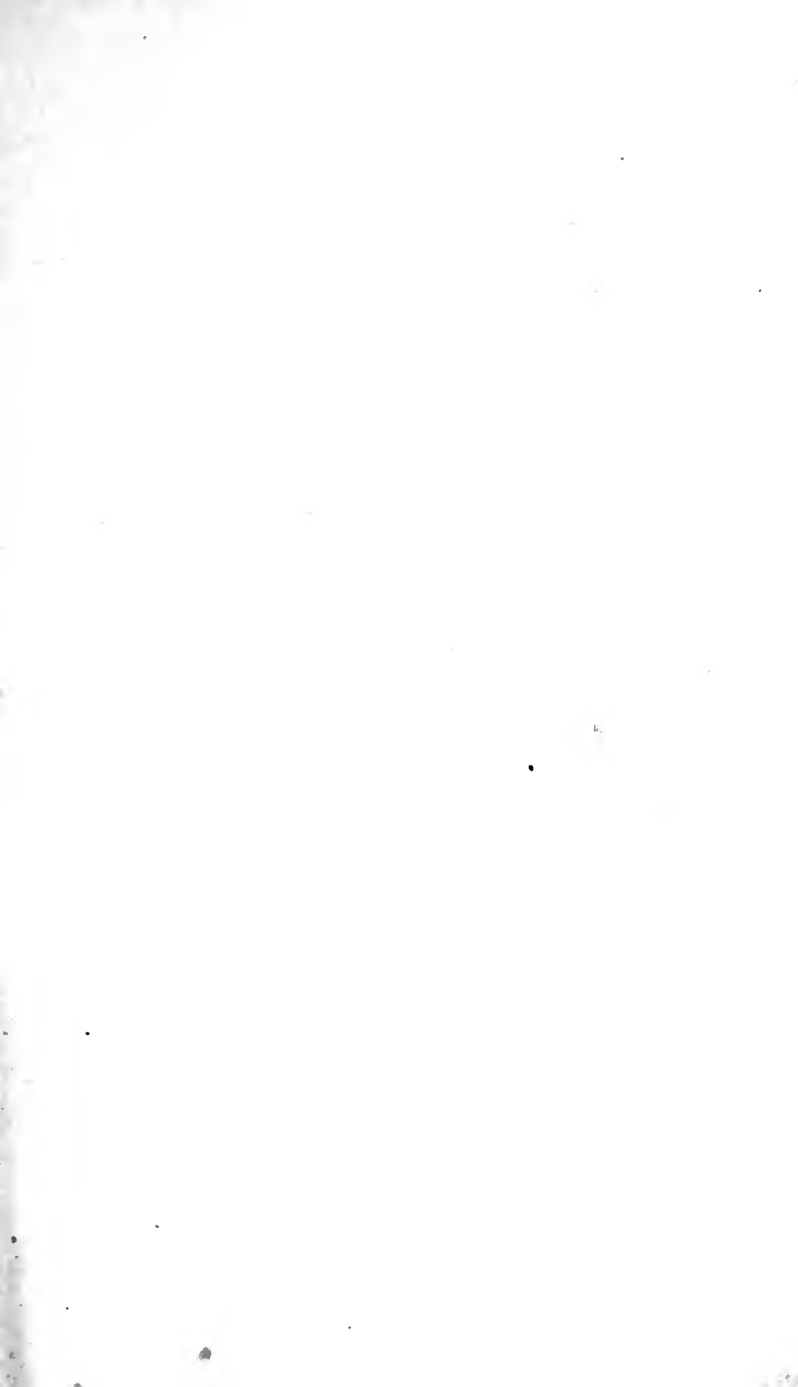
the match, the blacksmith, the rapidly-stiffening joint and probable lameness to come—all and everything, save those sunny ringlets and that peach-like cheek. I feel as I used to do about Kate Cotherstone, and, as I had since thought, I should never feel again. The moments flew in a blissful dream of bright eyes, mellow sunshine, balmy breezes, and soft tones—all these blended charms combining to produce that delightful languor which can only be experienced in the enjoyment of bodily repose accompanied by such accessories.

What cared I that Ripley won in a second innings with five wickets to go down? that Bagshot played as never mortal played before? that Swaddles (I quote once more from the *Ripley Watchman*) “again retired from his wicket without troubling the *scorer*?” or that the exhausted players were to adjourn to an *impromptu* dinner in the very tent where I was now luxuriating—except in so far as the latter arrangement promised to interrupt my delightful *tête-à-tête* with the widow?

The shouters shouted; the band played; Joe Bagshot, in consideration of his making sixty-eight off his own bat, was carried round the ground on the shoulders of his confederates;

the cloth was laid, the ale broached, and the dinner ready; but instead of being stunned by toasts, overwhelmed by hurraing, and stifled by tobacco-smoke, I was lolling comfortably in an open barouche in the moonlight, and set down by Mrs. Montague Forbes at the door of Joe's parsonage, after a drive such as seldom falls to the lot of a maimed and unsuccessful cricketer in this work-a-day world.

END OF VOLUME THE FIRST.









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